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Empowering Visions

The Politics of Representation in Hindu Nationalism

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INTRODUCTION

> *When and how will the worlds of form that have arisen in mechanics, in film, machine construction and the new physics, and that overpowered us without our being aware of it, make what is natural in them clear to us? When will the conditions of society be reached in which these forms or those that have arisen from them open themselves up to us as natural forms?*
>
> (Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*[1])

Walter Benjamin's quotation addresses the role played by new audiovisual media in the construction of national identity, and the way in which the perception of individuals and groups in a society is influenced by modern technologies. Benjamin's comment is part of a large body of reflections accumulated in his *Arcades Project*, a montage on the rise and the 'signatures' of modern societies and public life in Europe in the context of popular culture, politics and capitalism at the turn of the nineteenth century. Naturally, his concern with production and distribution of various visual media demands to be read within the historical context from which it arose. Yet, despite today's very different technological, social and economic conditions, which impact on, and are shaped by, postmodern and postcolonial societies, Benjamin's concern with the relationships between actuality and virtuality, fantasy and rationality, and the complex invisible and visible strategies of ideological power that enhance ways of seeing and displaying, is still relevant. To Benjamin, images and other popular media had become part of the dense webs of a virtual reality, something that pretends to be firm, natural and 'true', yet is in fact highly dynamic, ambiguous and man-made: the result of ideological and political agendas. His interest in the ways in which ideas and concepts are 'commodified'—produced and disseminated by means of technology—and how the senses as well as social relations and utopian visions of society can be influenced this way, implicitly addresses discussions on processes of globalization, identification and, particularly relevant with respect to this study, nationhood.

In this book, new media technology's role will be discussed in the context of the construction of 'Indianness' in Hindu cultural nationalism (*Hindutva*), especially between the years 1989 and 1993. Hindutva grounds its normative ideological doctrines and political practices on the fundamental assumption that Hindu peoplehood as the 'Indian way of life' and common will comprises the main element in the 'politics of representation' and political participation. In the late 1980s, Hindutva's main political wing, the *Bharatiya Janata Party* (the BJP, or 'Party of the Indian People'), along with other organizations that align themselves to the idea of Hindu cultural nationalism, increasingly came to exploit and rely upon new audiovisual media technologies. Video technology in particular, and with it alternative possibilities of self-representation and identity constitution, enabled the various Hindutva spokespeople to translate their ideas and interests with respect to 'nation-building' through a chain of staged events and marketing strategies linked to the new media. These events and strategies used for political mobilization were often appropriated from traditional spheres of local popular culture into what emerged as a 'new public space'. At the same time, new rhetoric could unfold through reference to a dynamic and global flow of ideas and images, people and things.[2] It is the study of the dynamic relationship between images and video media, politics and ideology, imagined and actual audiences that is the subject of this book.

Hindutva as a field of discourse

In examining Jain Studios, a video production company in India's capital New Delhi, which has been producing videos for the Hindu Right for almost ten years, and whose president was actively involved in BJP politics, I aim to present a case study of the social, cultural and political milieux in which the Hindu Right's ideological doctrine and politics have come to unfold a particular rhetoric with respect to the production and use of audiovisual media. As the central object of exploration, Jain Studios and its videos are understood as a 'field of discourse' according to cultural anthropologist Werner Schiffauer's sense of the phrase. Schiffauer understands this term as the fusion of Michel Foucault's notion of discourse as an authoritative practice by which social reality can be negotiated, constituted and institutionalized, with Pierre Bourdieu's idea of social agents competing for symbolic power in a particular arena.[3] The various agents and their respective activities involving Jain Studios' political agenda in those years, as well as the videos and their distribution techniques, are therefore recognized as being involved in acts of positioning and rule-making, be it preserving, challenging or changing existing positions and rules. Schiffauer, as he examines the processes of identity constitution in the context of migration, urbanization and the growth of so-called religious

fundamentalism among Turkish migrants in Europe, argues that an act of positioning in a field of discourse is always enacted by, and thus must be examined in *relation to* other agents' positions, public domains and discourses. Furthermore, an act of positioning by a social agent requires the elaboration of boundaries on the basis of developing categories of rejection, recognition and inclusion/exclusion of other agents. This observation is crucial when it comes to analysing Hindutva spokespeople's efforts to translate narratives of crisis and define stereotypes in order to polarize social agents, particularly in a discourse on nationality that naturalizes Hindutva as 'a way of life' and identifies ethnic identity with religion-as-culture (e.g. Hindus versus Muslims). Proposing the field of discourse as a sphere in which 'cultural agents interact with each other with regard to interpretations, norms, values, questions of style and memories', Schiffauer argues that agents positioning themselves within such a field have to 'evolve commitments, evoke memories, connect with concepts of order: points of reference have to be identified—experiences, concerns, techniques, styles of action—to be translatable, and communicable'.[4] This notion of the 'field of discourse' provides us with the opportunity to approach a domain of ethnographic interest, which, in this context, is to understand that Hindutva is *not* a homogenous and enclosed entity, a symbolic system or order with a relatively stable centre and membership (even if spokespeople as well as many of its critics affirm this view). On the contrary, this study proposes that the idea and rhetoric of Hindutva nationalism, as well as the social agents involved in contesting and negotiating Hindutva as a 'way of life', are characterized by a high degree of fluidity, diversity, conflict and ambiguity. Thus, the 'aura of factuality' linked to nationhood changes from context to context, and over time.

What will be explored here is why, how and when Hindutva ideologues and pragmatics exploited the video media in order to claim power over public opinion-making and opinion-shaping. In this context, Jain Studios' positioning in political and economic domains, as well as the specific videos examined here, are part and parcel of the 'practice of representation'. This implies on one hand the attempt to speak for and thus (politically) represent a particular group of people, desires and concerns as legitimate. On the other hand, as Schiffauer has eloquently argued, the practice of representation addresses the idea of 'making a picture of something or someone', and thereby enabling various agents to identify with and assemble under such a persuasive imagery.[5] This perspective touches upon what Stuart Hall explores in his discussion of representation and media. He argues that representation does not *re-present* a meaning that is already there and static. Instead, he proposes that representation is a signifying practice within a particular discourse that constitutes reality, and thus identity, *in statu procedenti*.[6] This brings us back

to Walter Benjamin's concern with the use and 'work' of images and new media technologies as crucial elements of the 'patterning' of perception and world-making.[7]

If we assume that the practice of representation thus constitutes the field of discourse, in that individuals and collectives align themselves to particular 'identities'- in-the-making, if they gain the impression that they can recognize themselves as a speaker as well as an image,[8] we need to focus attention on how Jain Studios and its videos were attributed with the hope to fulfil both these functions, and how, when and why practices of representation might have changed considerably. This is of significance, for instance, in the ways in which video technologies were exploited by Hindutva spokespeople to bring about an envisaged change in government and society, and to empower the (Hindu) people.

Empowering Visions

I have used the plural 'visions' to indicate the complexity of these intertwined domains of seeing, and the multiple meanings that refer to the location of vision in a specific sociopolitical context, and as an identity-constituting form of agency. There are, of course, different types of vision.[9] There is the act of empirical seeing in which the visual is embedded in cultural-specific contexts and everyday practises. Then there is imaginary vision, which is often connected to a utopian idea of society and enables the imaginary positioning and creation of a relationship between viewer and viewed, both in space and time. Arjun Appadurai (1997), Alfred Gell (1998), Paul Ricoeur (1991) have all pointed out that desire, imagination and utopia are intrinsically linked to each other, and can become catalysts for and reflections of social practice. Therefore, vision relates imagination to politics and ideology, space to time, image to narrative, and agent to action. As a form of social practice, vision thus has to be seen as another field of discourse that enables us to examine acts and relations of positioning, representation and community constitution. In doing so, it becomes obvious that vision is not primordial and unchanging, but rather a created and highly fluid historical phenomenon that unfolds in myriad ways. As we look at objects or situations, we are at once selecting, categorizing and constituting order, projecting as well as enhancing or diverting fears and desires, claiming ownership over and attachment to something, and thus attributing elaborate meaning and value to the world around us. In this, meaning and value are not fixed in a firm system of coordinates, but instead respond to the changing dynamics of relations in the discursive field, even if ideology—as a search for a fundamental basis and in the Hindu right context its *avatar* the ethnic stereotype—the opposite, that is, attempts to fix and standardize ways of seeing.

In this study, Hindutva ideology is examined as a discursive practice that exploited video media to contest, negotiate and propagate visions of utopian states and societies. I will argue that video was a technique through which ideologues created and fetishized visions for the 'Hindu way of life' as a hyperbolic spectacle, a symbolic and political apparatus that aims at surveillance and control of the addressees through various means of communication. Propaganda videos produced for temporary mobilization, such as parliamentary and state assembly election campaigns, relied on and worked by means of spectacle and sensation as well as authoritative and quasi-logical rhetoric. To a great extent, the visual and performative strategies displayed in Jain Studios videos thus worked on the level of playful seduction and paternalist treatment of the imagined viewer. In what ways this seemingly paradox constellation was to create 'panoptic' order and control, is explored in Chapter 3.

Media and imagination as social practice

This brings us to the question of imagination as a social practice. One key argument of this book is that video technology opened a space in which others besides Hindutva leaders could be displayed as spearheading a successful revolutionary movement. The nation-as-audience could itself be imagined 'into being' as a united, enthusiastically participating crowd, a powerful icon that invites further participation. I nevertheless propose that the creation of a space for participation is but performative, and has to be invented and reinvented, locked up in an endless loop. It is through this space and the gaze of nationalism evolved in it that potential supporters are, particularly through the video media, ideally and virtually disciplined and tamed. The visualization of a crowd engaging in something 'larger than life', in a historical movement, according to the Hindutva ideologues, should be read as a truism, and at the same time become a self-fulfilling prophecy that will actually transform viewers into active supporters, and, most of all, voters for the BJP.

Arjun Appadurai has pinpointed the relevance of imagination in the field of cultural production, an aspect that has widely been pushed to the periphery of cultural studies and anthropology, partly because of the difficulties faced by a scholar when trying to tackle the question of 'measurability' of the imagined, and the imaginary. Appadurai argues that

> No longer mere fantasy . . . no longer simple escape… no longer elite pastime… and no longer mere contemplation… the imagination has become an organized field of social practices, a form of work… and a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility.[10]

Imagination becomes a precondition for as well as a result of social action, although caution is required with respect to the actual impact of the ideas presented in the videos as well as the videos themselves; the imaginary may also be not intended for realization social practice. Rather, in remaining forever utopian, they offer ongoing scope for the dynamic and productive elaboration of models and possibilities of being put into effect in different contexts, for the creation of desires and fears.

Video technology has provided Hindutva protagonists with a wide range of stylistic possibilities in responding to the various requirements and interests of target audiences and potential commissioning agents; docudrama, montage and special effects are only a few of the means by which aesthetically persuasive, and to some extent familiar formulae were appropriated from popular culture and religious practices, and recycled in order to meet the viewing habits of different audience groups. It will be argued that video techniques were employed to enhance a particular kind of imagination through which Hindutva rhetoric could be staged as 'credible', 'realistic' and 'touching' (see Chapter 3). The intrinsic relationship between imagination and media also comes to play a relevant role in the creation of utopian visions of ideal societies and governance, in the employment of antithesis and synthesis as means to write the play of nationhood, to dialectically link reason and emotion, the archaic and the modern, and—despite their constructedness—as Benjamin writes, to 'open themselves up to us as natural forms'.[11]

Examination of the makeup of national identities points attention to the fact that behind such a creative process of cultural production, there are power players, moving in specific milieux and led by specific interests and goals—that is, to exploit media technology in order to shape a particular imagined national community. Arjun Appadurai has argued that the field of cultural production must be understood as a complex web of different competing and overlapping 'landscapes', or 'flows', for which he elaborated terms such as 'mediascape', or 'ethnoscape'.[12] These '-scapes' enable us to explore the way imagination works between various domains of the virtual and the actual, be it landscapes of persons and group identities, media narratives and images, or financial capital. With such a concept of a dynamic web of intertwined domains, that can be constructively combined with Schiffauer's 'field of discourse', or Ulf Hannerz's idea of the social milieu, we can now establish a useful 'think-space' (*Denkraum*)[13] in which to understand identity as a fluid and contested patchwork or montage rather than as a homogenous entity. Yet, particularly in Hindutva rhetoric, identities come to be presented as precisely these kind of enclosed capsules, as spokespeople attempt to create classifications that allow them to differentiate and constitute themselves in comparison to, and often via an aggressive exclusion of, 'the Other'. Hindutva provided such a case in which ideologues based their concepts of nationality on culturalist assumptions

of an alleged 'primordial' difference between Hindus and Muslims, a dichotomy that finds entry in, and is affirmed by, many of the Jain Studios videos. However, there are different ways of imagining and staging notions of 'Self' vis-à-vis an 'Other', an important point that is discussed in later chapters.[14] The videos discussed here attempt to visualize and narrate a particular conflict 'into being' in which ethno-political identifies are both script and result of a 'divine game of violence and glory'. They also helped in shaping a gaze, or vision, through which communal violence could be legitimised, and responsibilities shifted.

Staging images and narratives of nationhood

With Jain Studios' production and distribution facilities, the BJP (often in collaboration with other Hindu Right allies) sought to impact on public opinion-building, particularly for the purpose of gaining votes in the run-up to elections. For the purpose of establishing a (temporary or long-lasting) relationship between the representative and the public, self-presentation had to be successfully staged in a political arena.[15] Different staging techniques were reflected within the videos themselves; the ways in which the videos came to be presented in various distribution contexts, as well as the parallels and differences between other means of mass communication, are therefore discussed in the following chapters of this book.

Expanding on the concept that imagination plays a vital role in the process of nation-building, Homi Bhabha's notion that nations are narrated into being through performative and pedagogic strategies will then be considered here.[16] Like images, narratives are part of a discursive strategy and enhance feelings of an aura of f/actuality and evidence. In his work on the representation of the New World from European points of view, Stephen Greenblatt comments on the role of narrative: 'It is one of the principal powers of narrative to gesture toward what is not in fact expressed, to create the illusion of presences that are in reality absent.'[17] Presence and presentation are thus related to each other in that they are crafted and dependent on the credibility of display. Thus image and narrative, in their connection to poetics and viewing, become part of a theatrical spectacle and experience that is enhanced through video technology. It will nonetheless be argued that both image and narrative, fused in the video's presentation, appeal to different ways of seeing and understanding. The first, image, persuades the viewer through complexity, corporeality and spectacle, while the second, narrative, tends to 'tame' and 'discipline' the image as well as the potential viewer's ways of seeing and reading into a linear and authoritarian script. To judge the extent to which the attempted 'colonization' of people's minds by means of different aesthetic and ideological strategies has been successful is a complex and rather unreliable

undertaking. Recent media studies have investigated the 'riddle of reception' and media consumption, and warned of a direct impact approach.[18] Furthermore, no qualitative research can inform us about the reception of popular media at the height of the videos' distribution. Most of all, from its very outset this research focused on the people and agendas involved in the production and distribution of media technology as they sought to spread and consolidate the idea of Hindutva. On the basis of the empirical and other data collected, this study is an ethnography of image and media *production*, not reception. However, I want to acknowledge here that both production and reception reinforce each other, and that images and media reception can never be fully controlled and are thus subject to various contexts and ways of reading. Only in this context is it important to ask what these agents expected, or imagined, their audiences to be like.

The videos examined here do not require analysis only because of their inherent performances, but also because they are part and parcel of the Hindutva staging of public events. In fact, as far as media technology's capacity to create public consciousness is concerned, the videos themselves can be understood as public events, as calls for participation. To present itself as a competent political player which, in a democracy such as India, gains its legitimacy through the people's electoral vote, the BJP intensively employed and relied on theatrical forms of staging, both in outdoor public events and through its use of videos. The kinds of rhetoric, and the translations of key images and narratives as staged events via media technology, require discussion in relation to the role of imagination and agency in the process of group mobilization, especially as these images and narratives on offer for identification have not evolved *ex nihilo*. Rather, they generally carry with them their own histories, 'careers' or 'social lives', or conversely are imbued with such biographical power.[19] Very often, these 'lives' are rooted in the colonial era, particularly in the complex rhetoric and collective memory that evolved with the struggle for national independence. These histories and 'image journeys' are considered in several case studies within this book. They concern us in the ways in which they are used and reinterpreted today, or even, as in some cases, combined with new images and narratives. Such analysis enables us to trace the dynamics of Hindutva, particularly BJP rhetoric, as it set itself up dynamically, that is (possibly) 'becoming by doing'.

Exploiting video to create alternative visions of modernity

Hindutva spokespeople maintain that India needs an alternative modernity, one that is not tainted by the experience of Westernization. However, the challenge is not solely presented by the alleged external dangers of cultural and economic erosion due, for example, to satellite television and privatization

of the economy. The Indian secular state itself is being questioned and challenged through the videos, accused of being a carbon copy of the European nation state and therefore inadequate for Indian conditions, criticized as inviting abuse of minority rights, criminalization and corruption (see Chapters 1 and 2). One way of doing this was, as the case of Jain Studios demonstrates, to enhance the elaboration of an alternative media landscape that enabled a political player like the BJP to circumvent the government's strict regulation of opposition movements. This way, the party and its allies could position themselves provocatively in the public sphere and affirm their claim to reshape the modern nation state and civil society.

Despite the importance of Benedict Anderson's work *Imagined Communities*, he does not take into account the fact that modernity (and hence nationality) is not a homogenous, universal item for importation.[20] On the contrary, we need to address the question of 'alternative modernities' and collectives that have been and are being elaborated and constituted in a postcolonial global context. Western notions of modernity and nationhood are thereby translated and appropriated into specific cultural and local contexts in order that they may be challenged and revised. The search for an alternative modernity applies particularly to countries that have experienced colonial rule and have only recently come to set up their own sovereign nation states. There is a growing consensus among many representatives of postcolonial countries today that they are the passive recipients, even victims, of the 'garb' of western modernity, and/or of the ongoing colonization through globalization. However, an institution such as Jain Studios also reflects the attempt of the BJP to package Hindutva as the catalyst for a modern Indian identity, an identity that bases its visions of modernity on the invention of a Golden Age. In this respect, Jain Studios, like the BJP, enforced the creation of 'globally local' identities,[21] that is, the packaging of a concept such as modern nationhood by rooting it in notions of local histories and places. Many images and metaphors, narratives and concepts, have been appropriated from global flows, and were altered in non-modular local contexts. In a discussion of these processes, specifics of translation and reinterpretation deserve particular attention as they give insight into how, for example, the experience of modernity impacts on a rereading of the colonial predicament (see Chapters 4–6), and, at the same time, provides us with access to contemporary experiences and outward appearances of modern life in the enclosed world of the national.

Home and exile as prime metaphors and narrative devices employed in the video. The notion of dislocation may help us to understand that the process of creating alternative ideas of modernity and nationhood in a postcolonial country such as India came to be perceived as a self-empowering technique: to put oneself back on the map, to reclaim lost or stolen sites, to rewrite the history

of places, all these are legitimised reactions sought to re-place what is defined as alienating and threatening (Chapters 4–5). This view was applied to the idea of emancipation of a formerly colonized people that now challenged both the ghosts of the past and the notion of a dominating global hegemony. However, home and exile also provided, on the basis of culturalist claims, the impetus for ethno-religiously related violence against such members of the Indian state who were said not to 'belong' or to commit themselves to the idea of Hindutva nationality. Communal violence should thus be understood not as an outcome of a return to archaic or atavistic forms of social order, but as a child of (post-)modernity, and dynamic ethno-political fields or conflict.

On the fieldwork

The primary material used in this study on Hindutva nationality and new media technologies was collected during ethnographic fieldwork in Delhi (1996–7, 1998). To gain insight into the processes of video production and distribution, as well as the individual interpretations of some of the imagery and stylistic devices, I conducted a number of interviews with J K Jain, the studios' president, as well as various employees of Jain Studios. I had met Dr Jain at an election campaign in Old Delhi in 1996, when he campaigned on a BJP ticket. After visiting his studios several times, and communicating my interest in political iconography, in the production and distribution of videos, J K Jain provided me with more than twenty research copies of videos produced by his company, from which I made a selection for a more detailed discussion on the issue of Hindutva nationhood (see videography).[22] More visual and audiovisual material was collected in some of the miscellanea shops of the Hindutva organizations' head offices in New Delhi and from individual agents. In order to contextualize Jain Studios within the larger networks of media production and political mobilization, interviews were conducted with spokespeople of various organizations aligned to the Hindu Right.[23] At the time of the ethnographic fieldwork, many of them occupied public posts in one of the organizations. Their positions ranged from moderates to hardliners, from senior leaders of the BJP, to chief Hindutva ideologues, to editors of weekly newspapers and to historians of the movement's 'think tank', as well as Hindutva supporters such as teachers, journalists or keepers of Hindutva miscellanea shops. Most of the interviewees were met repeatedly in order to create an adequate context for unstructured in-depth interviews. This approach has proved to be of particular relevance in sketching an outline of the proliferation of perspectives on the role played by media and imagery in the complex process of constructing views of Hindutva nationality. To understand the Hindutva politics of staging events, especially the use of audiovisual media, I accompanied J K Jain and

other politicians during the election campaigns for the 1996 and 1998 parliamentary elections. In 1997, to gain an idea of the important rhetoric device of the 'patriotic pilgrimage' (*deshbhakti ki teerth yatra*), I accompanied the *Swarna Jayanti Rath Yatra,* led by then BJP party president L K Advani, from Basti, a small town in Uttar Pradesh bordering Bihar, via Ayodhya to Lucknow.

In order to trace the 'social life' of key images, additional research was undertaken in archives and libraries of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library and the Election Commission (Delhi); the Indian Office Library and Records of the British Library, the Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, the South Asia Department of the British Museum, and the Indian Department of the Victoria & Albert Museum, the Warburg Institute (London), and the Warburg House (Hamburg).

The names of some informants have been modified to guarantee their personal integrity. In addition to alterations to their first names, surnames have been abbreviated. The names of persons of public status have not been changed.

On the chapters

While the first two chapters in this book address Jain Studios' position within political, economic and ideological networks and domains, Chapters 3–6 focus on particular political, or issue-based videos produced by Jain Studios.

The first chapter discusses the role of Jain Studios in the construction of Hindutva nationality by looking at the ideological doctrines and political goals enshrined in the movement. Placing J K Jain's career centre-stage, he is contextualized as an agent located in several overlapping and competing networks of identity constitution, in particular, the political, social and economic domains. Taking Jain and his studios as a field of discourse, discussion is provided on how the production house enhanced, and was enhanced by, Hindutva ideology and politics, for example, within the tension-loaded negotiations of community constitution between personal means of communication and modern means that came to be linked to a relatively anonymous level of community constitution. The focus of this discussion is Jain Studios' role in the elaboration of an alternative media landscape, conditions of video production and distribution, and the relevance of media and politics as domains for the creation of individual careers.

Chapter 2 looks at the ways in which video media were exploited by Hindutva spokespeople in order to present themselves as a credible revolutionary movement and political force, and to shape the audience's ideas of nationhood. In light of particular metaphors that it was hoped would bolster symbolic and political power, for example, fraternity and divine kingship, key concepts of society and state within Hindutva ideology are discussed and

contextualized in this chapter. It asks how Jain Studios' video production and distribution were expected to pursue ideological notions and political agendas, what role is played by information and entertainment in this connection, and examines in what way and why we should distinguish different approaches and expectations formulated by Hindutva spokespeople with regard to the impact of the videos.

The third chapter deals with the development of a visual and stylistic vocabulary in the videos produced by Jain Studios. It follows the meandering development of familiar key images and viewing practices as they came to be appropriated from the domain of popular culture. Particular images are examined according to their links to practices of shaping and disciplining a 'nationalist gaze', and the creation of a non-modular realism. At centre stage in this discussion are two montage scenes that provide insight into the commodification of Hindutva ideology, especially in terms of the mimetic alteration of Hindu religious practices and thought in order to equip the political domain with life and familiarity, and heighten chances of mobilization.

The role of constituting identity through performance is taken a step further in the fourth chapter, in which we look at the applications of images and narratives in the context of creating nationality through territorial bondage, particularly in the context of notions such as sacred land, place and displacement through which the Hindu people could be displayed as 'foreigners in their own country'. The videos of two different patriotic pilgrimages discussed here show that the BJP has drawn upon several cartographic models, indigenous and foreign, to follow its attempt to constitute—via territorial associations and cartographic references—Hindu nationhood, and invoke ideas of India as a meaningful and homely space in which the 'civilized' can dwell safely. In this process, the idea of Mother India emerged as a key icon for the personification of national devotion, on the basis of conflict and cartographic anxiety. The chapter talks about how this particular icon came to be exploited in the context of the Kashmir conflict and the creation of the Muslim stereotype as an anti-national, 'Homeless', threat.

Chapter 5 investigates the role of myth and history in the attempt of Hindutva agents to rewrite the history of the Hindu people which has, according to them, been written by those who intended to humiliate and misrepresent India and mutate the 'true' lineage of Hindu nationality. Media technology played a vital role in giving visual and narrative 'evidence', and thus credibility, to the Hindutva agenda, which sought to promote self-empowerment by referring to the notion of returning to an indigenous and 'true' history of the Hindu people, inclusive of the Hindus' allegedly mythical origins and 'popular belief'. The chapter also examines how the videos particularly served the BJP's interest in exploiting ideas such as the 'turning point in history' in order to enhance and legitimize the tension-loaded relationship with Muslims, and

how this agenda coincided with the 'rewriting history' project by creating inherent categories of classification for 'Hindu sentiment' and 'Muslim psyche'.

The last chapter looks at a specific form of dramatizing national devotion in Hindutva rhetoric—the figure of the heroic martyr. It is argued that some of Jain Studios' videos were made to create a specific, aggressive atmosphere of self-sacrifice among a certain group of young male supporters of the Hindu Right. The idea of their martyrdom was meant to advocate and focus the Hindutva spokespeople's claim for righteousness and authority, and to challenge the secular government to such an extent that it would have to reveal fully its alleged illegitimacy. The narratives and imagery linked to the notion of heroic martyrdom demonstrate how different concepts of self-sacrifice and sacred violence came to be reflected in the rhetoric of Hindutva nationality, representing the devout citizen.

1

JAIN STUDIOS ON THE MEANDERING STAIRWAY TO SUCCESS

Introducing the field of discourse

Jain Studios is a media software production company located in New Delhi. Set up in 1985, it has produced over one hundred political videos related to Parliamentary and Assembly elections in India as well as issue-based videos on campaigns and other events organized and staged for the purpose of mobilizing supporters for the Hindutva agenda.[1] The president of the Studios is Dr Jinendra Kumar Jain, a medical doctor, ambitious and visionary businessman, and active supporter of Hindu cultural nationalism (Hindutva)[2] in the 1980s and early 1990s. In political and ideological circles of India's capital Delhi, for the duration of those years, J K Jain and his studios were mostly known for their alliance with the nationalist *Bharatiya Janata Party* (Party of the Indian People; hereafter referred to as BJP) and other organizations related to the ideological body of Hindutva, all of which are subsumed under the umbrella of the Sangh Parivar.[3] The 'Sangh', or association/brotherhood, is a pan-national network of affiliated organizations that functions on a variety of levels, such as parliamentary as well as non-parliamentary, educational, social and cultural activities. This complex infrastructure caters to a wide range of groups, interests and needs.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s in particular, the BJP—as the official political branch of the Sangh Parivar—had come to function as the major speaker and catalyst for a social movement taking place particularly in north and west India. Its agenda was based on the notion that Hindu culture was a superior unifying sign-system for nationality that could provide the Indian (read 'Hindu') people with both moral values and social harmony, as well as notions of political participation in 'righteous' governance. One of the central platforms on which issues surrounding Hindutva nationality were staged in those years, and for which Jain Studios produced some crucial videos, was the Ayodhya controversy. The basis of this broad controversy which took place

between representatives of the Sangh Parivar, the secular government, and spokespeople of Muslim and secular groups, was a dispute over the alleged birthplace of Lord Rama at the site of the Babri mosque in Ayodhya, a town in the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. The claim made by the organizations of the Hindu Right was that the mosque, built under Mughal rule in the first half of the sixteenth century, was an illegitimate structure that had been built on Rama's birthplace in order to humiliate the Hindu people. The Sangh Parivar demanded its removal so that a temple to Rama could be built on the same spot. The reconstruction, so the argument went, would reaffirm Lord Rama's rule, his status as mythic god-king and national icon, and therefore reconstitute the Hindu people's honour and heal their historical wound. The 'Ayodhya Campaign', or Ramjanmabhoomi Movement (movement for the liberation of Rama's birthplace) began in 1983, and entered a 'hot phase' in 1989, leading to the mosque's demolition on December 6, 1992.[4] This event coincided with, and was followed by, violent clashes between Hindus and Muslims.[5] The dispute around the site is still ongoing, and displays a remarkable capacity for charging emotions, particularly with respect to ethno-political identities. With the Ayodhya dispute, the Sangh Parivar could position its activist interests at centre-stage of the public discourse on nationality, especially since the issue served the BJP well as an electoral strategy. (The dense symbolical, performative and thus constitutive potential of the 'narrative' is explored throughout the book.)

Yet, as Ghanshyam Shah has argued, the BJP's success was 'not an overnight event attributable only to the Ram-Janmabhoomi issue'.[6] Likewise, both J K Jain's and his studios' successes could not have occurred without the certain social, economic and political 'chemistry' that was shaping India in the 1980s, leading to rapid transformations affecting urban and rural India. It was this same chemistry that served as the catalyst for the Hindu Right, in terms of pushing itself into public debate and redefining the 'rules' of those agents who had previously claimed this power but had lost credibility.

By acting as a 'switchboard' for the complex interaction emerging from and impacting on all these developments, Jain Studios provides us with abundant information from which to identify issues relating to both Indian media and politics. Furthermore, we are able to trace the internal difficulties and ambiguities of Hindutva spokespeople, who attempted to create the idea of a single nationhood that both caters for and mobilizes its citizens towards Hindutva ideology and politics, all the while being very conscious of the external conditions that could possibly rend apart this homogenizing process. In rejecting the idea that culture and identity-construction are somehow enclosed, self-sufficient systems, this study has identified Jain Studios and its owner J K Jain, as well as the BJP and its allied organizations, as being agents who actively engaged in a dynamic and complex 'public relations' process with

the intention of swaying values and emotions. To a large extent, this process was formulated within the sphere of the electronic media. In its attempt to create a 'counter-public' with which to challenge the government in power, the Sangh Parivar found that once an adequate infrastructure for the production and distribution of messages had been created, it could enhance and exploit this alternative media landscape as a performative tool. It was with this new media form—especially videos—that J K Jain's innovative contribution promoted this movement and challenged the Indian media landscape.

Through the production and distribution of political videos, Hindutva spokespeople could translate, contest and negotiate ideas of the nation-state and society. The media landscape thus became a field of conflict enhanced by, and having an impact upon, power struggles, be they of a symbolic, economic, social or political nature. This domain of media production was overlapped and bordered by other domains, or what Arjun Appadurai called 'scapes', that is, dynamic landscapes that are 'deeply perspectival constructs, inflected by the historical, linguistic, and political situatedness of different sorts of actors'.[7] Outlining J K Jain's and Jain Studios' profiles, in terms of Hindutva doctrines and practices in the late 1980s and early 1990s, permits discussion on the ways in which the Studios attempted to respond to and possibly even challenge the profiles of those different, entwined domains. The media landscape, therefore, as it evolved during those years, plays a particularly central role for this chapter, and its commercial, political and ideological aspects will be examined in more detail. One cannot be understood without considering the others. This is why throughout this chapter as well as the next, excursions will be made into domains of the political, economic, cultural and social. Both J K Jain and his studios will serve as hosts for a multitude of empirical reference points, like an imaginary harbour for the departure and return of meandering ideas and arguments that evolved around Hindutva agents' notions of the ideal/typical national community in relation to the nation-state, media exploitation and particular social groups.

Within such a dense net of production, Jain Studios acted as a 'contact zone'[8] through which ideological doctrines and political practices were sought and employed by Hindutva agents in order to have an impact upon and challenge the public sphere.[9] In this context, one of the key arguments to be posited in this chapter is that J K Jain became a spokesperson for Hindutva out of his involvement in preparing and shaping various techniques and tactics of media production and distribution for the Sangh Parivar. It will be argued that these refined techniques and tactics enabled BJP spokespeople to disseminate the party's agenda and aspects of Hindutva ideology in ways previously inaccessible to political parties in opposition in India. This opportunity was particularly relevant at a time when audiovisual media technology became increasingly important for electoral campaigns and mass communication in

general. In this way, Jain Studios contributed to a diversification, if not even 'democratization', of the mediascape in India. However, due to the exploitation of Jain Studios' videos for indoctrination and temporary mobilization of radical grassroots networks by the RSS and the VHP for various events and campaigns, and owing to the fact that borders between the BJP and those Sangh Parivar organizations were often highly blurred, Jain Studios' videos also contributed to a heightening of communal tensions and conflict in India around 1990—particularly through their involvement in manipulating emotions around the Ayodhya controversy.

In order to better understand Jain Studios within the rise and ideological background of the Hindutva movement, in the first section of this chapter ('The family tree'), J K Jain's career has been broken down into contextualized units, each relating to central ideas, groups and developments of Hindutva doctrines and discursive practices. By looking at various stepping stones on J K Jain's professional path, we are able to highlight and trace some of the essential aspects of Hindutva nationalism along its meandering path to success. This discussion will provide insights into how J K Jain and Jain Studios came to dovetail the concerns of Hindutva politics in the nexus of political, economic and media developments. The second section, 'Positioning Jain Studios', explores the development of the studios by discussing their rise and decline in three stages. In this context, other employees of Jain Studios will also be introduced. Even though the case studies of these employees are anecdotal to some extent, their careers, including J K Jain's, are considered representative of specific aspects that help us to understand the growth and dynamic constitution of Hindutva cultural nationalism.

The 'family tree'

Jain's early years with the RSS

How was J K Jain transformed into the influential media magnate and politically 'big man'[10] that he became in the late 1980s and early 1990s? The point of departure is an examination of Jain's relation to the mother organization of the Sangh Parivar, the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* ('Association of National Volunteers' or 'National Volunteers' Corps', hereafter RSS), an organization that not only has been influential in providing an ideological frame for action but also delegates individual workers to function as ideological think tanks and consultants in affiliated organizations such as the BJP or the *Vishwa Hindu Parishad* (World Hindu Congress, hereafter referred to as VHP[11]). Attention will then be turned to the emergence of Jain Studios in the context of political transformation and economic liberalization. In this context, other Jain Studios employees as well as Sangh Parivar activists will be introduced.

J K Jain was born in 1946, a year before India's Independence, when the country was officially transformed from her status of a British colony into a sovereign (yet partitioned) nation-state. As a young boy, he joined the RSS and took part in the activities of their local grassroots branches or *shakhas*.[12] Thus in his regular meetings with RSS boys and teachers (*shikshak*), Jain became familiar with Hindutva hierarchies and doctrines. The *shakhas* play a vital role in the context of RSS community constitution, indoctrination and campaign-based mobilization. Their daily and weekly activities are based on collective character-building exercises held in the mornings and/or evenings. Furthermore, specific rituals are meant to enhance feelings of solidarity with deep attachment to the cadre organization and its ideological doctrines. Like all other boys in the *shakha*s, Jain participated in the hoisting and worship of the saffron-coloured, triangular Hindu flag (*bhagadhwaj*), recited the RSS prayers, played games, practised sports and yoga, and participated in discussions on character-building and nationalist history.

To some extent, J K Jain's career, especially from his early schooldays to the time of setting up Jain Studios in 1985, firmly rested on the supporting network of the Sangh Parivar, in particular the RSS and the BJP. This was not simply due to his possessing a shared ideology with the RSS, but also reflected his discontentment at that time with his economic situation. He came from an industrialized town in a rather economically underdeveloped region of the state of Uttar Pradesh. In conversation, J K Jain reflected upon his childhood, emphasizing the moderate conditions under which he grew up.[13] His attitude towards the RSS, and to some extent the BJP as well, was strongly influenced by his awareness that his life could easily have taken a different, possibly less glamorous turn. This consciousness invoked in him both nostalgia and personal gratitude, combined with feelings of deep loyalty towards the Sangh Parivar. As if it were a natural extension of his blood line, or a 'second skin', J K Jain regarded himself as a member of the extended 'family', the RSS. In that, Jain is representative of the RSS' attempt to initiate in their supporters a shift from secondary to primary loyalties. The 'ties that bind' an individual to such a large organization are the personal networks, the face-to-face interaction on a regular basis as well as a rhetoric of familial solidarity (Chapter 2).

The RSS, founded in 1925 by Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, is dedicated to the promotion of Hindu culture, religion and heritage on a variety of levels such as education, social life, economics, technology and science. Like many grassroots nationalist organizations engaged in the task of recruitment and indoctrination,[14] the RSS and other organizations of the Sangh Parivar are most active in the field of education as well as mobilization of its cadre-groups through particular forms of event-management and cooperation with other Sangh Parivar affiliates. One key agenda is to encourage and set up social, educational and developmental projects in urban slum areas and impoverished

rural areas that are among the economically needy sections of society, for example, *adivasi* (tribals). Some initiatives seek to challenge the impact of Christian missions whom they blame for forcefully converting *adivasi* and other economically backward groups to Christianity, thereby 'alienating' them from what they define as Hindu culture. Other initiatives seek to cultivate and promote Hindu culture through workshops, exhibitions and public lectures.[15] Furthermore, the RSS holds annual regional and pan-national training camps for its full-time organizers (*pracharaks*) and voluntary workers (*swayamsevaks*). RSS-informants' estimates of the number of its supporters—there is no official membership—vary between 30,000 and 50,000 *shakhas* and between two and six million volunteers, which places it among the largest independent social organizations in India.[16] The image the RSS likes to project to its own workers as well as outside observers, for example at parades or in their visual propaganda material, is one of a quasi-military, well-disciplined and organized body (Figures, 1 and 2).

RSS ideologues frequently point out that the organization is neither political nor religious, but rather one based on social and cultural ideas and agendas. It does not seek direct representation in parliamentary power. For this purpose, the Jana Sangh and the BJP were constituted, and a look at the careers of many senior BJP leaders and upcoming politicians reveals their association with the mother organization.[17] Religious practice is perceived as fragmenting, rather than uniting, the Hindu fold,[18] even though many Sangh Parivar rituals and other strategies of representation display clear appropriation from Hindu religion, be it from elitist or popular domains (see following Chapters). The self-labelling of the RSS as apolitical partly derives from the fact that since 1947 the organization has been banned three times—predominantly for its active involvement in communalist politics.[19] This classification of the RSS as an organization with social and cultural commitment rather than political ambitions or religious bias also makes governmental interventions and critique a complicated matter. Yet, BJP networks, manifestos and politics, with roots deep in RSS organization and doctrines, do point towards a dynamic oscillation between theory and practice. The blurred spheres of cultural and political activity are often consciously exploited, especially during election times. Aware of their invaluable role as a mobilizing force, RSS leaders exert pressure on political agents by appealing to Sangh Parivar organizations and supporters to provide a particular political party with help or to withdraw it—be it for the Congress Party (I) or the BJP.[20]

Hindutva doctrines are often found in the writings and speeches of various RSS ideologues and other leaders of the Hindu Right, some of which were written during the time of British colonial rule, others in the first two decades after Independence.[21] These texts celebrate the idea of a renaissance of ancient Hindu traditions and scriptures and reinterpret them as social codes and ideal



Figure 1 A calendar depicting RSS *shakhas* superimposed on a map of India, along with Lord Krishna, a portrait of Hedgewar and the Hindu flag. 1990s. Private collection.

political conduct for the modern nation-state. The much vaunted notion of 'the Hindu people', for example, is irrevocably entwined with the notion of a mythic origin and glorious past of a 'chosen people' as a primeval nation. The Hindus are also defined as the 'authentic' inheritors of indigenous mainstream culture, possessing the moral legitimacy and competence to shape both today's national citizenry and righteous government.[22] Against this backdrop, Hindu Right propaganda defines the Hindus as the obvious-but-ignored majority group within the Indian nation. 'Awakening' of the people (*jan jagaran*) to this alleged discrimination and misrepresentation is thus the major agenda of Hindutva. In RSS doctrines, the idea of a national community is idealized and projected as an organic society and brotherhood of equals (*samajik samarasata,* social harmony). The organizational structure of the RSS, therefore, operates as a microcosm of this imagined 'moral community' of Indians. Based on the cult of the leader, who is also referred to as 'philosophical teacher' or *sar sanga chalak*,[23] the supporters, or voluntary workers (*swayamsevaks*) are asked to submit themselves to a strict social hierarchy and to the idea of absolute loyalty and devotion to leaders and doctrines. Individual careers within the



Figure 2 Footage of an RSS drill performance. 1950s–1960s. Still from *GMH*.

cadres commence through active recruitment. RSS leaders and teachers, for example, personally select those pupils who seem to have a particular talent, vision and commitment, and who could seemingly promote and strengthen Hindutva ideology through various forms of activity.

J K Jain must have been such a promising person. In fact, his career was that of a 'godchild' to the RSS. Yet, when discussing Jain Studios, he exhibited a distinctly professional character, claiming the basic autonomy of the Studios from the Sangh Parivar with statements such as: 'I never mix business with politics.'[24] Instead, Jain highlighted the Studios' principle of openness for every possible client: 'I saw to it that this facility was not monopolised by us [BJP]. We (Jain Studios) opened the door so that *every* party person, leader, or party could make use of the videos.'[25] Jain further explained:

> Some people in the press wrote articles against me saying that I have no morals, I have no principles, and I only love money. And that whoever will give money to me, I'm willing to sell my soul ... I told them: 'My concept of professionalism is that a professional gives full opportunity to everybody to become his client.' And I said, 'I run my profession like a surgeon. If somebody comes to me with a pain of the bladder, and the whole bladder has to be removed, I don't have to ask him about his caste, what is his religion, what is his political ideology! He has come to me because he's ill. And my duty is to ... remove the bladder. And what do I expect? Not that he votes for me, but that he pays his fees. I am not

going to change my religion, or my ideology. Nor am I asking anyone else to change his. I am only providing a professional service.[26]

According to this comment, business is truly 'objective' in that it does not evince any political bias. And to some extent, as discussed below, Jain Studios revealed a remarkable policy of political colour-blindness. That said, the majority of Jain Studios' political videos were ultimately produced for the Sangh Parivar and used for the advancement of particular BJP politicians during election campaigns, and also of Hindutva-related issues of disputable character, such as the Ayodhya controversy. (Since most of the videos were made to strengthen the BJP's political appearance, reference is also made to them as 'political' and/or 'issue-based videos'.) This may partly be the result of the powerful mechanism of the large, ideological 'joint family', as support often depended on these 'symbolic' contracts. As one RSS activist explained in a conversation about J K Jain: 'He is our common friend ... Everybody here (in the Sangh Parivar) is mutual friends. So actually, we do take help from each other.'[27] This includes the effective use of connections for J K Jain and his Studios across the various organizations within the Sangh. But the social contract also obligates them to provide, if needed, services, most probably free of charge, where other, more traditional loyalties and networks might fail. The RSS concept of moral community filters through to all levels of its supporters' activities. It is within this concept of life-long solidarity and personal loyalties that the power for mobilizing in support of Hindutva ideology and politics shapes behaviour most effectively.

At this point, it is important to note the relevance of symbolic and cultural capital in the field of J K Jain's career within Hindutva politics. The sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has highlighted these concepts as parts of an agent's competencies as he or she moves within fields of power.[28] There is, on the one hand, the value of accumulated prestige, fame, religious respect or honour based on knowledge and recognition; this is what he termed symbolic capital. Cultural capital, on the other hand, is a form of knowledge acquired through education that enables the social agent to decode cultural relations and commodities (ibid.).[29] As distinct domains of power, symbolic and cultural capital both affect and are enhanced by those who have political or economic power. In J K Jain's case, some RSS teachers and/or leaders must have recognized his ideological competence and vision. With the support of the RSS, through its concepts of brotherhood, social security provided through the Sangh Parivar's pan-Indian networks, and personal sponsorship, Jain could transgress and transcend categories of caste, kin and class that would otherwise probably have blocked his specific educational career and restricted him to a less mobile life.[30] Thus merit, acquired through education and other personal skills, instead of birth, decided Jain's upwardly mobile career. Other networks now came to work for him.

Crossing over

Within the Sangh Parivar, however, the making of a career with the RSS would have likely developed differently from one with the BJP, due to varying interests and pragmatic, organizational structures. With his strong background with and sponsorship from the RSS, Jain moved to Delhi in 1962, where he studied medicine. During his years at university, he became an active member of the *Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad* (All India Council of Students), an organization within the Sangh Parivar that encourages individual careers on the basis of a student's activities related to Hindutva within university politics.[31] After completing his studies in 1973, he turned to the free market and private enterprise as part of his self-realization. Jain married and took up work as a medical doctor in Old Delhi. He quickly set up his own private clinic, Jain Medical Centre, in South Delhi, an area that today is booming economically and inhabited by a high percentage of upwardly mobile, middle class people.[32] Jain remained attached to the Sangh Parivar network through voluntary work as shown, for example, in his activities in the early 1980s as Secretary of the Deendayal Research Institute, an educational institution and RSS affiliate.[33]

By arranging his ideological outlook around his economic aspirations, J K Jain turned into what could be called a 'social hybrid'. In the modern, urban surroundings to which Jain was then exposed, his personal interests increasingly placed him at the crossroads of power. His business interests became fused with his ideological activities as he increasingly associated himself with social agents and interest groups aligned with the political agenda of the BJP. For a man like J K Jain, who had relatively quickly come to enjoy the prestige of being a member of the new burgeoning middle classes by the mid-1980s, and who had begun to earn public recognition in the market-oriented milieu that dominated Delhi public life in the expanding metropolis, the grassroots activities of the RSS were soon no longer appealing. Nevertheless, various reasons for this move have to be considered, too. For one, the difference between the organizational structures and dynamics of the RSS and BJP reflected diverging ideological and pragmatic requirements respectively (even though in some cases, such as elections, as mentioned above, the borders between the cultural and political spheres blur), especially because of a strong anti-capitalist bias within RSS doctrine. *Shakha*-work may be effective in terms of creating deep loyalties through life-long indoctrination and personal interaction. Yet, compared to the RSS, who emphasized the continual indoctrination of its supporters in a non-parliamentary sphere, the BJP needed to be able to appeal to a much larger, more diverse, and to a great extent, more anonymous audience to expand its political base and public presence. This also required that politics be issue-based in order to create emotive waves in a relatively short time and so to invoke voter identification. Spectacular events with flexible, fast, and

simultaneous communication through various media technologies increasingly became the norm, instead of ongoing indoctrination through daily face-to-face communication, set in firm frames of highly ritualized and coded routine. In order to react to these needs, new players were required to enter the political field, such as political campaign strategists and media managers. These people were needed to package BJP spokesmen and their messages in a credible manner, and to present them in appealing, audience-friendly environments, be it stage performances or audiovisual narratives, or both simultaneously. These specialists also provided the political ideologues with distribution strategies specific to their respective audiences. In such a dynamic environment, individual careers were being instantly made and unmade according to the wide-ranging needs and interests of party spokespeople and current political issues.

Various reasons can be given to explain why J K Jain decided to cross over into this dynamic political milieu during the most formative years of the BJP, the mid-1980s, when the party was aimed primarily at rapid political expansion and mobilization. Firstly, his ideological background coupled with his symbolic and cultural capital enabled him to preserve and demonstrate his loyalties to the Sangh. Secondly, his political aspirations could easily be fused with his strong business interests. Thirdly, all things considered, he was perfectly situated to envisage a mediascape tailored exactly to the needs of the organization at that particular time. In consequence, J K Jain could increasingly distance himself from the rather enclosed, conservative and orthodox realms of the RSS, and direct his attention towards the performance- and market-oriented Hindutva segment of the BJP.

J K Jain's successful career must also be linked to the reality of Delhi's modern urban life; it was an ideal context for his career because of its complex milieu. Sociologist Ulf Hannerz[34] highlighted the fact that a metropolitan city is a condensed space that does not only host many and diverse people and organizations, but also enables the coexistence of administrative, political, cultural and economic centres. Likewise, a city enhances the elaboration of sometimes distinctly different domains of everyday life such as family, work and education. Moving in and between them, a social agent can develop different social relations, roles and competencies in each of them.[35] Furthermore, centres and domains are linked through complex communication processes and social networks. Traditional and modern lifestyles, and their means of communication, intersect and collide to shape new temporary milieus in which interaction takes place on the basis of the reinterpretations of various experiences, interests and desires, ideological doctrines and political agendas. J K Jain's attempt to fuse his educational and ideological backgrounds with his economic and political interests, as well as his shift from the orthodox and enclosed style of the RSS to the more pragmatic politics of the BJP, which

encouraged the constitution of new, more dynamic groups and initiatives, has to be seen as a result of such an experience of modernity.

Tailoring communication means between orthodoxy and pragmatism

J K Jain's move towards the more pragmatic and open structures of the BJP has also to be related to the different demands particular social groups may have regarding media exploitation and communication. In this context, the RSS and BJP greatly differed from each other in the mid-1980s, and even the early 1990s. Even though both players relied on Jain Studios' videos and distribution networks to some extent, the views upon new media technologies and the ways in which they were expected to 'work' with audiences have to be differentiated, as do the addressees themselves and the domains in which they were to be reached by the videos (see also Chapter 2).

For practical reasons, the BJP proved to be a promising domain of success for Jain Studios, in that, in order to constitute itself as a 'visible' and appealing player at the political platform, the party needed a medium for the production and distribution of 'visibility', or representation. In the late 1980s, video recorders and colour televisions had just begun to enter the living rooms of the middle classes.[36] This dynamic development of the Indian media landscape heightened the transformation of the public domain, affecting the political, social and economic fields of power and representation. In the early days of this change, both the RSS and BJP had been equally reluctant to open up to image marketing. However, because of its market-driven orientation, in those years, the BJP, with Jain Studios as a spearheading agent, picked up speed and increasingly paid attention to innovative uses of media technologies as one major strategy of self-promotion.

Opposed to this, the RSS' mediascape at that time remained predominantly limited to the print media. While the BJP was intent on presenting an inviting attitude to attract voters on a multimedia basis, RSS spokespeople were primarily concerned with efficient organizational doctrinal work among their existing grassroots networks and their affiliated institutions and activities. Predominantly orthodox and enclosed, their means of communication remained very traditional and conservative too. Personal contacts and networks, either among workers or between pupils and teachers, dominated RSS social interaction and ideological indoctrination. The most common media of self-representation until the late 1980s—with exceptions such as *shakha* activities, training camps and in-house festivities—were the print media. Nearly all of the 11 regions in India (*kshetra*) marked out by the RSS have their own daily and/or weekly newspapers, each written in the respective regional language. Among the few weeklies distributed on a pan-Indian level were the Hindi *Panchjanya*

and its English counterpart, *The Organiser–Voice of the Nation* (hereafter referred to as *Organiser*). The RSS' predominant use of print media and its spokespeople's reluctance to experiment with new media and audiences were certainly reasons why J K Jain was tempted to cross borders into a more uncertain, but also more promising terrain. Especially as it offered him the opportunity to set up and promote a video production company, thereby becoming a pioneer within both the political and audiovisual media domain.

New media technologies have played an important role in nation-building processes in that they have enabled the constitution of new communities. Benedict Anderson has argued that print capitalism was a major catalyst for the rise and spread of the concept of the modern nation-state across the globe.[37] Accepting this, our attention is thus focused on the reciprocal relationship between media and politics as it relates to the creation of communities. Newspapers, novels and other print media, along with the creation of museums, maps and logos, all created the conditions for both the display of political power and the formation of horizontal communities—that is, communities with no personal links between them. Rather than experiencing a belonging to a social unit on the basis of personal exchange, social agents' feelings of solidarity and membership (to the nation-state) evolved through imagination and the consumption of print media, both fused in the reader's awareness that media and messages are simultaneously perceived (though not homogenously decoded) by other readers too.

Through various means of communication, Hindutva ideologues have attempted to fuse different aesthetic practices and media to enhance their appeal among broader, anonymous audiences. In some ways, video technology can be seen as a prototypical outcome of this process of both fusion and expansion. But a study of Jain Studios also points to the simultaneous existence of different (audio)visual domains, each of which served a different purpose (Chapter 2). This is partly due to the high percentage of illiteracy in India, mainly in rural areas, which turn audiovisual technologies such as film, television and video into communication media that can fill this 'gap' of information distribution and knowledge production. Oral and other non-print media still play an important role in intra-personal communication. A media like video seems to collaborate quite comfortably with, and incorporate, other specific means of cultural production; it appropriates many ways of communication into its flexible body.[38] Video enables ideologues as well as political spokespeople to create new physical networks of image and narrative production and distribution as well as spaces in which the rather abstract notion of national community could be imagined, commodified and, to some extent, even experienced.

How can we apply the idea of a media tailored to the needs and interests of a particular social group and milieu to the context of Jain Studios as J K Jain

addressed the BJP with regard to his ideological visions and marketing ideas? Why did the RSS seem to be an inadequate milieu for the development of an alternative mediascape in the 1980s? In addition to *shakha* activities, the *swayamsevaks* are still today predominantly informed through the circulation of newspapers and other print media. This seems adequate for a cadre-based organization whose leaders are particularly confident that personal communication and participation in collective rituals and physical exercises can provide the foundation for enduring support.

The reluctance of RSS ideologues to use any new audiovisual media in the 1980s was based on at least three factors. Firstly, they saw no need to recruit *swayamsevaks* through new media—there were other modes and methods that had been elaborated upon and proved efficient enough over the many decades of indoctrination practice, often in linked generations. Furthermore, media distribution and reception was more difficult to control directly. Secondly, new audiovisual media like television and video were defined as essentially non-Indian, and therefore alienating, identity-threatening forces. This resentment against 'external' media sidelines the fact that the print media too, so heavily relied on by the RSS today, were first introduced by non-Indians—that is, missionaries and representatives of the East India Company. Thirdly, the distancing was also linked to economic factors. Around 1986, new imported technologies such as videocassette players/recorders (VCP/VCR) and cameras were incomparably more expensive than print media and other forms of indigenous communication. It was also difficult to set up professional video production companies. Furthermore, few Indians actually owned VCRs. In 1984, for example, less than half a million VCRs existed in India,[39] a relatively low number compared to the then distribution capacities and cost of print media.[40] Also, because of tax policies, television sets and VCRs were still considered and taxed as luxury items for most of the Indian population. Their access was thus restricted to the homes of the wealthiest five per cent of the Indian population.[41] The financial capacities of the RSS were limited, as its funds were not to be tapped for such risky undertakings. A self-sufficient organization like the RSS depends on donations, especially the annual ritual of donations from its members (*dakshina*). Therefore, representatives of the organization generally abstain from spending large sums for the purpose of additional self-representation to the public. Some of the points raised here were confirmed in an interview with Tarun Vijay, editor of *Panchjanya,* where he evaluated the role of Jain Studios and the chances of the RSS using video as a specific medium:

> To be honest and to be frank, there's hardly any role for the audiovisual media.... It plays no role in the RSS because most of the *shakhas* are in the lower middle or middle income group areas. Almost everywhere *shakha* work and the other work depends on locally raised resources. They don't

> have such resources anywhere to have a video show; or to have a video print made to be shown in a RSS *shakha*. Only recently they are having some big programmes of our office-bearers, so these programmes were shot on video-films.[42]

The evidence against the RSS using video on their own initiative was clearly plentiful, and J K Jain presumably guessed that any idea of setting up a video production company with the help of the RSS was simply illusory. He had to turn towards new horizons and raise enough money to get the business started. Yet he must have known that his ideas would eventually pay off, and that he would gain access to new methods of both doing business and attaining political power simultaneously.

It was precisely the BJP's desire to make the necessary promotional shift away from the face-to-face approach to the more anonymous format of video, and then target India's horizontal audiences in order to literally become more visible, which gave J K Jain the confidence he needed to promote Jain Studios. Less concerned with new, imagined communities than he was with facts and figures in terms of economic and political success, he rightly guessed that Jain Studios could one day play a crucial political role, a role that in the mid-1980s remained largely unrecognized. Thus, he sent the message to the BJP that with Jain Studios as the primary video production and distribution company, it could now use this new medium to challenge the government in power with new rhetorical techniques.

BJP leaders realized that new audiovisual media technologies, especially video, would be ideal for transgressing the borders between local/regional communities and the media, and thus help to persuade and mobilize larger audiences for its ideas and agendas. In this regard, J K Jain was crucial because he not only provided the concept of political videos but also answered the question of how the medium should be distributed.

Positioning Jain Studios

How can Jain Studios' history be contextualized with respect to the extensive transformations impacting on the development of Hindutva—that is, politics, economics, and media technologies? Three major phases had transformed the mediascape in India since her independence in 1947, and these are broadly outlined in the following section. As argued above, the phases impacted upon, were enhanced by, and overlapped with the domains of economics and national politics, and thus enforced the Jain Studios' rise. 'Paving the way for Jain Studios' examines the first phase—the relationship between politics, society and audiovisual media from Jawaharlal Nehru until the mid-1980s. The second phase, titled 'Jain Studios: 'Diversifying the political mediascape', considers

the advent of the state's move towards drastic policies of economic liberation, from the mid-1980s onwards, as well as other major shifts in national politics that contributed to Jain Studios' rise and its contribution to the creation of an alternative mediascape. 'The early 1930s: some may rise, while others may fall' is the last phase, and looks at Jain Studio's growth and decline in the context of globalization via satellite television.

Paving the way for Jain Studios

As the political wing of the RSS, and as direct successor to the *Jana Sangh* (People's Association), the BJP appeared on the horizon of the political landscape in 1980 as a minor player among a variety of regional and national parties. By far, the strongest party before that time, in terms of voter support, had been the Congress Party, which formed an almost unbroken chain of government after government. This success was largely based on the symbolic strength of the Nehru/Gandhi 'dynasty', a lineage that claimed power through linking itself to the Freedom Movement and the stability of familial inheritance.[43] The social changes taking place in India during the 1980s were closely connected with the transformation of the market's boundaries and the growth of the middle classes, as well as the increased mobilization and polarization of communal identities for the purpose of accumulating political power for the successive governments after Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's death in 1964.[44] By the late 1980s, the taken-for-granted monopoly of Congress-I and its power to credibly represent the nation had been weakened.[45] Corruption scandals within the government and party landscape had contributed to an increasing loss of credibility and fragmentation of the political scenery.[46] Likewise, new regional political players had formed and begun to lay claim to recognition with a stronger voice than previously.

The Nehruvian vision of the young nation-state had appealed, almost paternally, to all citizens alike to sacrifice themselves for the purpose of nation-building and public welfare, and to feel responsible for the support of the poor—all duties which were based on ideas deriving from the Freedom Struggle and the experience of colonized countries in general as underprivileged. The ideal of 'clean conduct' came to be widely shared by both government and members of the middle classes.[47] The traditional middle class evolved out of the Nehruvian idea of an interventionist, beneficent state that valued 'the work of economy (as it) was seen to stand for and be capable of resolving any problems that arose in the sphere of culture'.[48] Members of these middle classes came from the small-scale sector of the economy, lower civil servant ranks and private enterprises. And in the first years after Independence, they were driven by trust in the stability of the political and economic developments of the nation-state.

Yet, as Srirupa Roy argues, the state presented the discourse on nationality in the light of 'citizenship as lack',[49] suggesting an absence of civil consciousness due to the experience of colonialism. This ostensible 'lack' produced a gap to be filled by paternalist media rhetoric, a hybrid mixture based on popular history and the role of the cinema in nationalist imagination since its arrival in India in 1896, including the shorter lifespan of television technology in the post-colonial nation-state.

Perceiving and portraying India as a backward, underdeveloped nation, several governments and key representatives after 1947 were reluctant to make much use of television unless it could be credibly tied to the task of elevating the poor rather than entertaining the rich. Documentaries and newsreels, therefore, dominated the ways in which the nation-state attempted to represent itself and appeal to the citizenry. Even before television, the government had a compulsory screening policy for all cinema halls in the country through which the Information and Broadcasting Ministry's Films Division (FDI) could reach around 10 million people per week.[50] With films entitled *How to Vote* (1961), *Democracy in Action* (1951), or *Our Constitution* (1950), the citizenry was familiarized with issues such as social welfare, labour and employment, and community development. In 1975–6, overlapping with the National Emergency, Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE) was initiated, a project that resulted in indigenous satellite programming (INSAT), covering 86 per cent of the country by the early 1990s. Britta Ohm noted that the 'messages disseminated during SITE ... revolved around ... the straight consumption of secular knowledge such as family planning, health and nutrition, agricultural modernisation and literacy'.[51] As mutually supportive entities, SITE and the Emergency reflected the attempt to reinforce a protectionist market, as well as using totalitarian methods (disguised as developmental methods) to shape and control the citizenry, even by means of force—such as mass sterilization (which was disguised as education and upliftment). A major shift from the developmental to the political uses of media had happened because Indian national leaders had by then realized that they could 'communicate more directly with remote parts of the country not previously reached by mass communication'.[52] From that time onwards, the national broadcast network, Doordarshan, was increasingly monopolized by the respective governments in power.[53]

India's course of development was strongly challenged with Indira Gandhi's re-entry on the political stage in 1980, when she introduced an economic liberalization and 'Hinduization' of politics.[54] Sunil Khilnani refers to this shift in Gandhi's politics as a 'populist turn ... (that) redefined democracy as majority rule'.[55] This change also signified Gandhi's attempt to consolidate her declining power among former regional and rural support groups by centralizing the government's power, and by shifting her focus of attention away from

socialist federalism and some concern for the rural population to the commercial sector and urbanized middle class Hindus. In the light of the Asian Games in 1982, she ordered the loosening of import restrictions on foreign colour television sets and video players/recorders to allow for a better promotion of the state's agenda through Doordarshan's expanded network.[56] The move triggered a boom in audiovisual media, as many VCRs and television sets arrived in India via work migrants returning from Arabian countries.[57] This economic liberalization, however, did not include a parallel political liberalization with regard to a greater diversification of the media landscape, which would have enabled a multiplicity of parties to present their agenda on television. Until the early 1990s, it was almost impossible for opposition parties to get airtime on state television.

This situation paved the way for J K Jain to conceptualize a counter-strategy that would challenge this much criticized, centralist state monopoly of political representation via Doordarshan. The move overlapped with the BJP's strategy to establish a 'counter-public' in order to persuade voters. J K Jain commented on the situation at that time:

> Now what has been happening is that because of monopolistic role of government control through Doordarshan, there was no way that any other party other than the ruling party could use the video or television medium to express themselves. So we [Jain Studios] took the lead. And with all humbleness I say that we are quite responsible for democratizing the electronic media in this country.[58]

What Jain refers to as 'democratization' was rather a *diversification* of the electronic media. This was a difficult task in the early 1980s because the BJP was yet not prepared to shape the public discourse through new media technologies. In 1983, according to Jain, he decided to appeal to the Party's National Executive, of which he was a member at that time, assuming that he would receive positive responses. But his pioneering ideas were left unheard:

> Indira Gandhi had launched a massive expansion of the television network. ... I tried to inform my party ... that I feel this entire expansion of television network was being done by Indira Gandhi to use it for the next elections, because she was losing ground amongst the masses. ... Now, when I pose a problem, I should also offer a solution. So I said, 'in response to the might of the national television network, our party should think in terms of making use of video technology and should start developing this arm to be able to reach the masses'. ... I was ridiculed. I was kept quiet. I saw my own strength in the suggestion that I had made. So the party did not bother, but I went along to pursue this small seed, which grew, and did what it did. ... I was the first person who said that he could do it, and that I want to use these media![59]

Because of the government's exclusive rights to Doordarshan, the only possible way to circumvent this massive broadcast network was to develop an alternative mediascape through which controversial messages could be spread effectively to the voters.

Some general remarks can be made at this stage in order to position the rise of Jain Studios within a global context, too, in terms of exploiting the media as a tool of political opposition. Video technology, originally introduced as a surveillance tool for police in Western countries, was quickly appropriated by independent filmmakers and for community work around the world. These new agents took advantage of the fact that video cameras were smaller than film cameras, that amateurs could learn how to produce a video with much less effort than making a film, and that video cassettes were relatively cheap and easy to reproduce and disseminate. Jain Studios videos, for example, were shot on low resolution quality recording material (low band) that was later transferred onto Betacam and VHS format for distribution. With video, therefore, video commissioners and producers could more easily present their ideas and interests, which were often of a political or developmental nature, to specific audiences in order to raise awareness and empower disadvantaged groups.[60] Anthropologist Faye Ginsburg has referred to this new form of alternative media practice as 'indigenous media', innovative 'in both filmic representations and social processes, expressive of transformations in cultural and political identities'.[61] The monopolization of electronic media by the state, especially in the underdeveloped countries, is a common phenomenon and one fiercely contested by opposition groups. In the case of Iran, for example, Ayatollah Khomeini used audio and audiovisual cassettes to propagate his messages internally as well as in other Islamic countries such as Egypt and Turkey.[62] At the same time, in countries like the USA, electronic media came to be exploited for religious revivalism and fundamentalism.[63] Audio and video technology enabled social agents to communicate 'directly', and to 'get in touch' with specific audiences without depending on centralized television.

In this context, Jain Studios' activities can be seen as part of a global process towards a more 'indigenous' or localized media production and diversification of media landscapes.

Diversifying the political mediascape

The early 1980s were crucial for setting up Jain Studios in that the newly founded BJP looked for new means to communicate its agenda. How did Jain Studios and the BJP develop such an entwined relationship? How did J K Jain 'sell' his ideas and visions to party spokespeople? And where did Jain Studios demonstrate its greatest strength in terms of political mobilization in the alternative mediascape?

The second phase that paved the way for Hindutva politics was characterized by further economic liberalization policies under Indira Gandhi's son, Rajiv, who succeeded her as Prime Minister in 1985. Rajagopal has noted that Rajiv 'signaled a dual emphasis on both market forces and "national culture"',[64] openly fusing Western and indigenous commodities, such as a laptop, trainers and kurta-pyjamas (traditional north Indian dress for men) as his status symbols. Under Rajiv Gandhi, Indian culture was turned into a folkloristic theme park. Massive events like *Apna Utsav* (Our Festival) or ad campaigns like *Mera Bharat Mahan* contributed to the commodification and staging of 'Indian heritage' as a mass exhibition. The state began to appropriate regional and historic symbols and practices into its body of self-representation. Significantly, Rajiv Gandhi also commissioned the serialization of the epic *Ramayana* for Doordarshan, thereby providing the means for translating the popular Hindu mythological epic into political and national rhetoric.[65]

By the 1980s, the everyday life of an Indian middle class citizen was marked by the rather painful struggle to get access to education and jobs, basic administrative processes and public life. Everything that was thought to make a civil society function was touched by corruption. Congress(I) lost its credibility as a 'clean' party.[66] Nevertheless, Rajiv Gandhi pursued his mother's major concern for centralist politics, at the same time trying to reach the middle classes and the private commercial sector. He also continued her strategy of polarizing Hindus and Muslims for the purpose of electioneering. Rajagopal argued that the Ramjanmabhoomi campaign gained momentum when the Rajiv Gandhi government permitted the opening of the Babri mosque's gates for Hindu worship in 1986, hoping to increase his popularity among Hindu voters.[67] Rajiv Gandhi encouraged the further monopolization and expansion of Doordarshan as a mouthpiece of the central government,[68] and began using political videos in election campaigns.[69] Simultaneously, the Sangh Parivar, and especially the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), initiated a phase of staging issue-based events related to the Ramjanmabhoomi controversy in 1983. They used diverse symbolic means of mass mobilization, such as pilgrimage, which then set the stage for massive multimedia spectacles later built upon in collaboration with the BJP (Chapter 4).

It is important to note that a 'new' urban middle class had developed with the pragmatic realism and economic liberalization politics initiated by Indira and Rajiv Gandhi in their focus on the corporate private sector. Economic liberalization and the growing transparency of corruption among politicians in the public sphere muted the politicians' obligation to care for the welfare of the nation.[70] Economic success was increasingly separated from the paternalist morals and ideals once projected under Nehru. This was also encouraged through the commodification of Indian culture, thus favouring consumer choice over civil responsibility and the idea of a welfare state. At the same time, both

Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi's polarization of centre and periphery politics alienated regional political players from central rule. This fragmented and diversified political, economic and social landscapes, thus allowing long under-represented social groups such as the Dalit[71] to increasingly articulate their interests and shape public and political discourses. The Congress(I) was no longer able to convince its voters that it was a viable leader, and legitimate representative of the nation. It had failed to provide economic stability and civil security for the poor and middle classes, as well as particular communal groups. The mid-1980s were also marked by a growth of separatist movements in regions like Punjab, Kashmir, North-East India and Tamil Nadu. Separatist groups expressed the concern that their cultural and regional identities were not being recognized or adequately represented by the centralist state.[72]

Political marketing

All these developments occurring simultaneously made BJP pragmatists realise that this moment of governmental crisis and political instability was ripe for exploitation. Such was the sentiment in a statement by then party leader L K Advani as he commented on the reasons why the BJP decided to join the Ramjanmabhoomi campaign, which had until then been predominantly conceptualized and manifested in public by the VHP:

> The manner in which the State bent to fundamentalists and terrorists, the manner in which self-styled leaders of minorities sought to revive the politics of separatism which had led to the Partition of the country, and even more so the manner in which Prime Ministers and others genuflected to them; and the double standards which came more and more to mark public discourse in India to the point that the word 'Hindu' became something to be ashamed about, to the point that nationalism became a dirty word—these ignited a great revulsion among the people.[73]

So, in collaboration with the Sangh Parivar, the BJP decided to enter the political landscape by establishing a multimediascape, partly by joining the mass spectacles orchestrated by the VHP, and partly by banking on the elaboration of alternative media production and distribution networks. Economic liberalization and political rhetoric, to some extent appropriated from Anglo-American models of electioneering, convinced J K Jain that in order to convey any message related to those issues, powerful audiovisual spotlights were at stake:

> Then these will have to be required to be shown even to such a population which is out of reach of the television ... And [in 1983] I brought up this point, that we must understand what information technology really

> does to the complex politics. That out of the many issues that are there, it picks up one issue, focuses attention on it, and a complex situation is made into a single issue, a simple message which goes into the minds of the voters who decide who will rule.[74]

How the voters reacted to those packaged messages is not the focus of the discussion here. The important factor is that political messages and even politicians were increasingly being treated as commodities that had to be well packaged and marketed so that parties could be potentially effective, particularly from the late 1980s onwards.[75] Jain said:

> You see, the [BJP's] whole appreciation of using video media as a tool of communication, and therefore transforming society, began from there. That is where this kind of acknowledgement came. They recognised my role.[76]

This level of appreciation for a market-oriented mediascape resulted in new audiovisual media, as well as in another mass spectacle that had been actually adopted from the sphere of religious practice: the patriotic pilgrimage (*deshbhakti ki teerth yatra*) (Chapter 4). This emphasis on multimedia and event-based self-marketing was connected to the appointment of a whole new team of relatively young BJP media managers, campaign strategists and Hindutva hard-liners such as Pramod Mahajan, K N Govindacharya, and Narendra Modi. The latter are well-known for their backgrounds in RSS cadre-work. Like J K Jain, they had shifted from or moved between RSS asceticism and BJP pragmatism, though clearly for exclusively political careers.[77] In some ways, though, they shared Jain's opinions on public relations. Mahajan commented: 'I think it is time we stopped shying away from words such as "sell". We must realize that there has been a major revolution in communication.'[78] However, the key figure behind the BJP's public marketing strategies with respect to Hindutva doctrine was L K Advani, who had been in charge of the Rama *Rath Yatra* (1990), a large-scale event that became particularly controversial because of its aggressive communalist rhetoric.[79] Even though there was a consensus agreement that the Hindutva mediascape was as fragmented as the nationwide audience, and, as Rajagopal argued, the BJP's media strategy that followed from this, 'was pragmatic rather than part of a finely wrought plan',[80] it is clear that during this experimental early phase of the BJP in the political sphere, such a fragmentation was also creative and well-calculated. This became obvious in the case of the Rama *Rath Yatra*, which was an exceptionally well-organized media event fusing traditional and new means of communication, and offering various Sangh Parivar organizations the chance to contribute to and engage themselves in the campaign according to their own organizational strengths and facilities.

Setting up the studios' infrastructure

During its first two years, Jain Studios had survived on the mere production of educational and training videos related to medical and developmental issues (such as hygiene, medical care and family planning). These were made for private clients, but also for Doordarshan, India's national broadcast network. Then, from 1987 to 1987, in addition to recruiting some of his own family members into key positions, J K Jain started to appoint external employees to help manage his expanding enterprise, as well as to take and edit footage and so on.

Who were these people? Many of the young people who joined Jain Studios in these years had no connection at all with the Sangh Parivar and its doctrines. Rather than for ideological reasons, they were attracted to the studios for various career purposes. Rahul T, for example, joined Jain Studios in 1985, first as cameraman for medical and developmental videos, and then from 1989 onwards as cameraman and editor of some of the important issue-based videos produced for the Ayodhya campaign. Previous to 1985, Rahul T had studied fine arts at a well-known art college in Baroda (Gujarat). In conversation, he revealed that it was both the aesthetic and technological challenge as well as the educational impact the video media could have on audiences that appealed to him (Chapter 5). He explained:

> I was just thinking what one can do with television media because I was looking for something different ... I was finding myself very restricted to, say, a canvas, and probably confined to a particular place ... I still think that whatever film, whatever programme you make, can really influence a viewer, if you create in him that kind of sense, that kind of direction, and if you really work towards that.[81]

Another challenge was the new career opportunities that evolved with the expanding media landscape of the mid-1980s. Some people, like Ramesh K, who took up work for Jain Studios in 1987, had previous experience in other domains of new media technologies. Before coming to Delhi, he had lived and studied in Madhya Pradesh: 'I was involved in cassette industries, like teaching industries. This type of industry was also in Jawalpur in those days ... These were cassettes like my homage to Ganpati ... There were political audio cassettes also, so I was voicing over these cassettes.' He then moved to Delhi: 'I was searching for a job and one day I met Dr Jain ... Dr Jain appointed me and he said, "Your job is to voice over and write scripts."'[82] Matthew S, a South Indian Christian, recalled how he came to shift from feature film to video production:

> My dad was a feature film producer in Madras, a Malayalam feature film producer. .. And I was associated director of feature films ... I left Madras

> and my family, then I came to Delhi and married. After I married, I didn't have any source of livelihood. In Delhi there was no film industry – Bombay was the industry city... My wife knew Mrs Jain and Dr Jain. ... I just met Dr Jain there in the clinic. He said, 'You're a director? ... Why don't you come and see my studio? ... Why don't you work here?'[83]

It is important to note here that J K Jain did not only recruit people with affinities towards Hindutva. Nor did the employees of Jain Studios themselves feel any particular external pressure to identify with the ideology and politics of the Hindu Right, or become ideologically biased. Yet the informants interviewed in the course of this research have come up with various arguments related in particular to their involvement with the video production for the various specific events evolving around the Ayodhya controversy as well as election campaigns (Chapter 5). The empirical data demonstrate that in Jain Studios—despite J K Jain's connections to Hindutva spokespeople and his personal involvement in the Ayodhya controversy— interaction and possible identification with Hindutva ideology was only one of several relevant aspects in making personal choices. Because Jain Studios was one of the first non-governmental Indian undertakings in terms of media production, it attracted and addressed a range of 'new' agents, with educational backgrounds and visions differing from Sangh Parivar milieus. For example, we learn from Rahul T and Matthew S that both wanted a career at Jain Studios because of their fascination with audiovisual media's alleged power and prominence in public life, as well as the promising opportunities that were attached to the booming mediascape in India. Whether some of the employees became more or less involved in Hindutva issues during their work at Jain Studios is a different matter (Chapter 5).

Distributing the political message

By 1988, the BJP had finally come to embrace Jain's arguments for the creation of an alternative political media landscape and encouraged him to follow up the studios' transformation from being a producer of medical and developmental videos to producing political videos. Jain's main supporters for this process were senior BJP leaders, Vijaya 'Rajmata' Scindia and L K Advani, then party president. Thus, Jain's small undertaking was moved from central New Delhi to Vijaya Scindia's sprawling green grounds in South Delhi. The new Jain Studios were equipped with all the latest imported technological equipment. From there, strategies for software distribution and political mobilization could be greatly enhanced.[84]

The next major step taken toward creating a truly effective political-media apparatus was the development of *Videos-on-Wheels* (or VOW) that Jain had

begun developing in 1987. One innovative aspect of this venture lay in its combination of production and distribution. Another was the manner in which it incorporated the long lineage of indigenous culture and the tradition of migrating story-tellers and travelling cinemas who traversed the country, stopping in one village or town after the other, assembling villagers and townspeople in order to entertain and educate them with their stories. The attempt to use this fluid infrastructure of mobile cinemas for propaganda purposes had already been used, for instance, during the Second World War in the context of British newsreels.[85] Yet, this was still an activity that sought to centralize power in the—then colonial—government. The first effort to decentralize the state's media production and distribution really only started with the development of video media, and Jain Studios were effectively among the first agents to push the media landscape towards diversification. Simultaneously, other individual initiatives took place in Delhi—for example, *Newstrack* by the *India Today* journalist Madhu Trehan and her team. These videos not only often reflected a very critical if not provocative approach towards government politics, but also began to introduce westernized slots such as reports on lifestyle, sports and so on.[86] The distribution system was different though in that only individual subscribers received the tapes, and thus the reach of *Newstrack* was predominantly limited to urban and upper middle class audiences.

Back to Videos-on-Wheels. In Delhi, VOW soon found competition, such as *Video Express* (Dalmia-owned Govan Advertising), and *Dekho-Dekho* ('Look-Look').[87] None of these, however, catered directly to political clients. Thus, VOW must be understood as being a crucial contributor to the development of the political mediascape in India, particularly with respect to electoral communication. Like open-air mobile cinemas, the vans would typically be set up with screens at market places and on cricket grounds, as shown on the still taken from a self-promotion video by Jain Studios (Figure 3).[88] By 1990, VOW operated 50 vans, each equipped with 100-inch video screens and a video projection system with 60-watt speakers connected to 40-watt amplifiers.[89] In the late 1980s and early 1990s, VOW contributed to the growth of Jain Studios. Jain explained why:

> ... political videos were a new form of expression of political thoughts and ideologies and gave richer divergence to the parties who used it, coupled with this idea of *Videos-on-Wheels*, the whole came as [an entertainment] package. This did very well in the Indian market, especially for the rural areas. And in the process we could set up branches all over the country and in major cities. Because we had production facilities all over the country, we had marketing wealth all over the country, we thought we could launch a satellite television programme. So from a very humble beginning, a very modest target from just making



Figure 3 Videos-on-Wheels screening. Still from *Towards a Cheerful Revolution*.

some medical videos, because it was our determination to fight political adversity, and the energy we developed in the process, we became medical television to Jain Studios, Jain Studios to Jain Studios Network and from there to Jain Satellite Television. And today, you see the current state ... We are now a company having a market capitalisation value of about 760 million rupees (around US $1.8 million) (Figure 4).[90]

The first political video by Jain Studios was produced in 1987, for the election campaign of Devi Lal, a regional party leader from Haryana, a state bordering Delhi. Since then, Jain Studios has produced over 100 political videos, most of which were made during the early days of BJP's emergence onto the political landscape, between 1989 and 1993.[91] One particular video, *The Making of a Chief Minister* (1989), reveals Jain Studios' way of catering to the political field by promoting *VOW* as an all-embracing instrument for political campaigns. Interested political clients were often state-level parties, regional-level parties, national-level parties or individual politicians. Not only did senior BJP politicians like Vijaya 'Rajmata' Scindia (in 1989), or the well-known actor Satrughan Sinha, campaigning on a BJP ticket in 1992, approach Jain Studios to have their videos made and distributed by VOW. Leaders of other parties did too, such as Rajiv Gandhi (Congress-I, in 1989), Bal Thackeray (Shiv Sena, in 1989) and actor-turned-politician N T Rama Rao (Telugu Desam Party, in 1993) (Figures 5 and 6). Even Dr Jain had his own promotion video when he campaigned on a BJP ticket in Delhi's Chandni Chowk for the 1996



Figure 4 Jain Studios' premises. Still from *The Making of a Chief Minister*.

Parliamentary Elections. These videos were predominantly shown on televisions positioned at street corners and squares as well as by local cable operators (see below) within the contested neighbourhood.

To these leaders, video technology offered a new method for creating charisma in political rhetoric. The portrayal of political candidates and leaders ranged from worldly film stars to messianic leaders of revolutionary crusades.[92] In and through the videos, they could be depicted in ways that live performances did not often achieve. In montages, and with the help of special effects, images of politicians as contemplative, dedicated and empowered were fused with party manifestos and dramatic narratives, shots and texts that created narratives of responsible representatives of the people's will.[93] Most of the election campaign videos had to be delivered in less than a week and did not exceed a duration of thirty minutes in order to hold audiences' attention.[94] With VOW, the Studios attracted clients from both the political and commercial fields who wanted to make sure that their products would reach their respective audiences in remote, rural areas and urban regions as well as in particular slums areas. By directly providing the audience with the equipment required to watch videos, rather than banking on the then still scarce availability of VCRs, VOW responded to a gap in media marketing. In 1989, the weekly *Time* portrayed J K Jain as, 'the country's leading maker and distributor of political videos, a potent new force in Indian politics'.[95]

Videos-on-Wheels proved to be particularly useful when it came to accessing places with an absence of other broadcast channels, VCRs or other media



Figure 5 Rajiv Gandhi. Still from *The Making of a Chief Minister*.



Figure 6 N T Rama Rao, late leader of the Telugu Desam Party and Chief Minister of the State of Karnataka. Still from *The Making of a Chief Minister.*

tools of political campaigning. With respect to a country like India, this is extremely important, given that *c.* 700 million people still have no access to television via their own television sets. One video van can attract hundreds of people and visit up to four locations per day, sometimes raising several screens in order to create a spectacular media event.[96]

Between 1989 and 1992–93, VOW was used to circulate Jain Studios films for the Ramjanmabhoomi agitation; a time when mobilization activities were at their height and messages had to be spread quickly and on a large scale. Often, the standard strategy was that a Ramjanmabhoomi-related mass spectacle, like the Rama *Shila Puja* in 1989, would be documented by Jain Studios cameramen and brought back to the Delhi headquarters to be edited with other material to fit it into a larger video narrative. In some cases, a video would be shown to a small group of Sangh Parivar leaders for approval before copies were made and distributed. These videos would then be circulated by politicians and other Sangh Parivar members, and rarely through the services of VOW. On several occasions, both the events and the video distribution took place pre-election, indicating the effort of the Sangh Parivar to win elections.

However, relying on VOW networks alone for political mobilization was occasionally not enough. In addition, spokespeople from the VHP, RSS and BJP made sure that their workers made copies and distributed them, and showed the videos independently at public and semi-public meetings. The great advantage in doing this was that when a mobilization was needed fast, VCRs and tapes travelled quickly and 'relatively inconspiciously'.[97] This method also points to the complex nature of videos, in that they can enhance face-to-face communication, and 'provide greater community ... interaction, or formative input'.[98] Thus, in certain cases, they functioned as constitutive elements in community formation. Jain commented in an interview:

> The message sold in those information videos was so much appreciated that once people knew of the existence of those videos, they made their own efforts to get them. And the video is not something they must buy from us. They made their own duplicate copies and they themselves promulgated it. Because if you see our records, not more than 20,000 copies were coming out of our studio. But if it is seen practically, millions of copies were shown all over the country. So there is a huge gap between what we produced and what then circulated. Whoever saw it felt there is a cause in it, they made a copy, they themselves distributed it and that's how it went like a 'snowball system'.[99]

One advantage of Jain Studios was that the production and distribution of videos could be used to address both cadre-workers of the RSS and BJP activists, as well as entirely new audiences, most of whom were from the middle classes.

Even though videos were not important for the personal everyday indoctrination of RSS cadres, they were circulated among the branches for temporary mobilization, especially during the Ayodhya Campaign between 1989 and 1992. They were employed as a tool to recruit supporters on a temporary and highly emotive basis. In this context, it is important to mention that one of the key audiences of such short-term mobilization comprised the members of the Bajrang Dal, the militant youth wing of the VHP, who were, among other activities, involved in the demolition of the Babri mosque.[100]

To appeal to new audiences, the BJP also used new channels of distribution to market and present its programme. This was accomplished by using other video distributors who had also expanded due to the spread of audiovisual media in urban areas and increased purchasing power seen during those times. In the 1980s, home video had marked a crucial transformation phase within the Indian media landscape, so much so that the monopoly of state television was increasingly weakened and challenged by this new media. J K Jain's reference to the distribution of their videos by means of a snowball system points to the dynamic nature of video technology. In addition to VOW and miscellanea shops of the Sangh Parivar, Jain Studios utilized the services of the largely urban media networks such as video parlours and video libraries.[101]

Once a videocassette had left the Studios' compounds no control over its circulation and destiny could be secured. In 1990/91, members of the Rajya Sabha discussed calls to ban a political video produced by Jain Studios. The video, entitled *We Can Give Up Our Lives But We Cannot Break Our Vow* (Pran jaye par Vachan na jaye, hereafter *We Can Give Up Our Lives…*, see Chapter 6) carried footage showing paramilitary forces clashing with and shooting at *kar sevaks* (voluntary workers, those who perform selfless service to a deity) and ordinary pilgrims in Ayodhya, as well as footage of the dead bodies. As Ankur Jain's aformentioned quote on these Ayodhya-related Jain Studio videos indicates, they were extensively shown in Uttar Pradesh and most probably elsewhere. *We Can Give Up Our Lives…* was criticized for its communalist agenda, and Jain for his irresponsible behaviour in producing and distributing such a video. Jain rejected the accusations, and blamed the government instead, presenting himself solely as an 'informer'. Jain recalled having addressed government representatives:

> You have permitted the circulation of guns, rocket launchers, grenades. A gun is such a big thing! And all these collaborators, terrorists are going around in many parts of the country, killing people. You can't prevent the circulation of these guns. And you are asking to prevent the circulation of a cassette? Which anybody can put in the pocket and walk away with? Will you enter the bedrooms and drawing rooms of all the citizens of this country? Invade their privacy and see whether they're

> watching something they want to know whether you have banned or not? To maintain the law and order in this country it is the responsibility of you, Mr Prime Minister ... I'm the victim of your inefficiency![102]

This quote shows that video proved ideal not just for circumventing government media, by setting up alternative production and distribution networks, but also for reflecting the political opposition's attitude of ridiculing the state for its paralysis in trying to maintain law and order, not to mention controlling consumer choices of the people. There was some sort of a 'division of labour' when it came to the use of particular media for particular messages, depending on their routes and networks of distribution. The 1980s not only enhanced the elaboration of alternative media technologies but also created a vast market through which pirated copies of audio and audiovisual material could be disseminated. This market was relatively well protected from state intervention, regardless of whether or not the state acted for reasons of copyright issues or politics. This almost anarchical milieu therefore enabled the Sangh Parivar to get involved in the unscrupulous production and distribution of audio tapes with inflammatory speeches against Muslims and/or the central government. Some of the tapes continued to circulate despite being banned.[103]

Jain Studios was set up at a time when the political landscape was changing in so far as there was an increasing dissatisfaction with and need for a change in political governance and communication. Political opposition required both an alternative media infrastructure and a packaging of issues. Like a catalyst, new media technologies such as video enhanced the process of political and media diversification. This also coincided with social and economic changes that enabled rapid growth of new middle classes as well as economic privatization or 'liberalization' and thus consumerism. In order to tap into those new potential voting blocs, political communication required a commodification of ideology, and the elaboration of new distribution networks such as VOW. With J K Jain, a businessman as well as ideologue and political activist, Jain Studios provided the BJP in particular with such facilities. The boom had to come, if only for a time.

The 1990s: some may rise, while others may fall

With the arrival of transnationally backed private and foreign satellite television in India, the video landscape that both contributed to and was enhanced by Jain Studios' boom for many years found a rival whose competition became fierce.[104] The gap that had opened up due to audiences' increasing dissatisfaction with paternalist and 'dull developmental television programming',[105] as well as with governmental restrictions on political opposition, slowly closed.

The third phase is often defined as the advent of globalization in India. This concerns particularly the arrival of satellite television, which has often been referred to as the 'Invasion from the skies', and the growing number of multinational corporations (MNCs), which regarded the expanding middle classes in India as a marketing heaven for the goods they wanted to sell.[106] Globalization corresponded with further processes of commodification of Hindu culture and religion, as well as heightened governmental instability. In their examination of audiovisual media and globalization in South Asia, French and Richards argue that:

> Within these changes to the nature of broadcasting systems, attention was also drawn to the break-up of the nation-state as the pre-eminent macro social unit of control and regulation and its increasing inability to resist the power of multinational corporations to transcend national boundaries through trade and communication technologies.[107]

While globalization was both a chance and a danger to Jain Studios' growth, the increasing role of media technology gave a further push to the Sangh Parivar's perception of Hindutva as 'way of life' as an enclosed, manageable entity. In the 1990s, the term 'globalization', as well as what it seemed to encompass in practice, became another 'danger zone' for Hindutva rhetoric, suggesting that the Indian nation, and nationhood, were being 'diluted', 'drained' or 'emptied out'. A notion of threat and invasion surrounds this recent development that is also closely linked to the rise of coalition governments and to the BJP's apparent departure from Hindutva's ideological doctrines due to pragmatic negotiations. By the mid-1990s, the BJP leadership came to realise that the party needed to prove it could credibly respond to the diverse range of issues that faced the nation, from economic policies to education to housing. Thus political pragmatism rather than ideological reform forced the BJP to re-work its image in the public sphere, particularly after the Babri mosques's demolition on December 6, 1992, and then once again in the spring of 1998 when it achieved the largest representation within the coalition government of the National Democratic Alliance.

The attitude towards globalization's allegedly distorting effects on national identity and traditional ways of life has a history. Manu Goswami has shown that globalization is a concept that can be traced back to and finds parallels in the role of Indian nationalism during the British Raj, when, as she argued, the 'deterritorialization of the national economy was seen as the product of foreign intrusion, the encroachment of "alien" capital'.[108] This feeling of threat was easily intensified as the producer's real motivations for opening up India as a new consumer market often remained obscure and were habitually camouflaged as economic development and people's improvement. Likewise today, the

effects of globalization through satellite television, for instance, and the consumption of Western programmes, are difficult to localize. Among Sangh Parivar spokespeople, this has contributed to the demand for legal means by which the Indian state could actively react to and control foreign satellite channels, many of which remain filed in formal dossiers even today.[109]

The neoliberalization of the 1990s came to be identified with the 'selling-out' of India, linked to Westernization and ongoing colonization. This view was particularly popular among Sangh Parivar hardliners who tended to object to the neoliberal turn in BJP politics in the 1990s and instead demanded a more centralized and protectionist economic governmental policy. Particularly orthodox organizations like the RSS and the VHP declared a rhetorical battle against the perceived threats from 'the West'. In their view, new media hardware and software, to a large extent produced in the West, alienated the upright thinking and behaviour of Indians. Tarun Vijay, editor of the RSS-related Hindi weekly *Panchjanya* argued: 'We oppose the way the western programmes … like MTV, or whatever is there. Because that distances us from our roots'.[110] And B L Sharma, a VHP activist and former member of parliament for the BJP (Lok Sabha), told me that: 'Western culture has overpowered us through media. So something very wrong, you see, rubbish, may suit the Western countries, but it doesn't suit us.'[111] Lying behind the arguments of Vijay and Sharma was the allegation that Westernization would create individuals that could no longer be controlled through the ideals and values imbued in the notion of the 'Hindu fraternity' that is generally projected by the Hindu Right (see Chapter 2). Through Western concepts, not just the people but Indian culture and economics, connected as an organic whole, appeared to move out of control and rapidly decline. This view reappears in a statement by Seshadri Chari, editor of the RSS-related weekly *Organiser*: 'We don't want to be the dustbin of the world … Cultural degeneration is one problem we are facing. And the onslaught of the western culture is a very serious problem.'[112] This comment reflects the idea that India has once more been transformed into and exploited as a 'consumer' market, on the one hand, and a 'dustbin' for all the negative cultural effects of globalization (also identified with Westernization, through attributes such as individualism, a modern lifestyle, and therewith a steady decrease of moral values) by foreign agents, on the other hand. To some extent, these examples indicate a divergence between the orthodox hardliners and pragmatic moderates within the Sangh Parivar (see below). This particularly concerns the question of whether the BJP should proceed with a neoliberal policy, or whether it should promote the protectionist agenda of *swadeshi* (national self-reliance) projected by the RSS.[113]

The idea that globalization is somewhat a continuation of previous invasions and colonization is certainly not a view exclusively shared by Hindutva spokespeople; the effects of globalization as a hegemonic and homogenizing

force find critics among a diverse range of social groups. But representatives of the Hindu Right also employed a particularly forceful critique of Western goods and ideas as part of its larger political strategy against which they could elaborate upon and highlight alternative visions for an 'authentic' national Hindu culture. This portrait aided the Right in substantiating the need for an economic collective through the 'nationalization of capital' in the concepts of *swadeshi* and *swaraj* (self-rule).[114] The adaptation of concepts that had first evolved out of opposition to the British Raj corresponded well with Hindutva spokespeople's noted discomfort with the idea of India as a developmental state or backward 'Third World' country. Yet the polarization of so-called 'First' and 'Third' World and the creation of feelings of crisis due to ongoing colonization enabled Hindutva ideologues to come forward with visions of a strong interventionist (Hindu) state that could, as we shall see in the following chapter, be camouflaged as based on common consensus. This being so, members of the new urban middle classes occupying the private sector welcomed Western status symbols translated via consumer goods and television software. Many of them also appreciated the BJP's positive attitude towards economic liberalization, as this stance legitimized their personal interests.[115]

How did J K Jain respond to this changing environment that he had come to stimulate just a few years before? In this context, Jain, confident that new media technology from the West should be embraced, refrained from condemning 'Westernization' as a force disempowering people located at the periphery of Europe and the USA. Instead, he defined it as an emancipation tool for Indians. Placing his studios in the imagined environment of self-empowerment, Jain rejected the portrayal of globalization as something to fear and passively accept, instead presenting the arrival of new media technology as a vehicle for 'freedom of expression'. He argued:

> If we are just a recipient country, then we will see whatever is shown. ... But if the country is simultaneously developing its own broadcasting base and its own software production capabilities ... Unless we participate in that information age revolution, we will just be criticising and nobody will be able to control our own generation ... While we see in this new technology the possibility of freedom of expression, we also fear—some of us. But I am not among those who fear. I think that our bravery should stand with us and let us enjoy this, rather than fear it.[116]

Even though there were more pertinent reasons for J K Jain's involvement in media production, such as ideology, politics and economics (manifest in a heightened flexibility due to the government's bias towards the private sector), this quote does highlight a relevant issue that was not recognized by most Sangh Parivar spokespeople in the 1990s. It is the acknowledgement that

globalization and with it a burgeoning middle class attracted both by capital flows and Hindutva ideology could not be avoided. Instead, new ways of conceptualizing diverse programming strategies and of packaging ideas and interests for equally diverse audiences were now required.

From 1987 to 1988, Jain Television set up branches in cities such as Chennai (Madras), Hyderabad, Bangalore and Mumbai (Bombay). Each studio had shooting, recording and post-production facilities as well as a team of creative and technical people, catering to middle class audiences in regional languages. By the mid-1990s, Jain Studios had established three independent departments: video production, VOW (including video distribution) and Jain TV (from 1994–96 Jain Satellite TV), that produced, bought and broadcast television programmes which were apolitical and highly commercial.[117] J K Jain's idea of challenging Doordarshan's monopoly—for example, by presenting poll analysis during elections—had paid off. In 1995, Jain TV scored a victory over DD by providing election results and analysis before DD could.[118] And during Lok Sabha elections, Jain Satellite TV telecasted full speeches of L K Advani and A B Vajpayee,[119] even catering to more than 50 African and Asian countries, predominantly those hosting Indian migrants (non-residential Indians, also NRI), with a programme entitled *Jain Election Special*. Especially in urban centres, these programmes were also available via the growing network of cable operators who courted the middle classes.[120]

For some time, political and economic interests were successfully paired in both Jain's political career and his Studios' expansion. During his ownership of Jain Studios, Jain was not only active in senior BJP politics, but was also elected member of parliament (Upper House, Rajya Sabha) by the BJP from 1990 to 1994, and twice campaigned for a seat in the Lower House (Lok Sabha). He had reached his goal of becoming a public spokesman for the BJP. Many Jain Studios videos showed him next to senior BJP leaders, discussing politics and addressing the people in public meetings.

In the mid-1990s, however, Jain Studios' success decreased, particularly with regard to the production of political videos and Jain (Satellite) Television. In this light, J K Jain's above appeal to bravely and joyfully embrace media globalization carried almost mythical qualities that remind us of David gearing up to fight Goliath. After almost a decade of political and economic success, economic liberalization had become the key factor in slowing sales, and halting—if not turning back—the Studios' success. Shalini Dhanda, Jain TV's Programming Director, commented on the discriminatory politics of the broadcasting bill that prevented private television channels uplinking to satellites from Indian territory while foreign satellite television companies could broadcast their programmes directly from abroad:[121]

> You can send your tapes far out. Like when we were on the Russian satellite we were uplinking from Lukna—that is, outside Moscow. When we were on PAS4, we were uplinking from Singapore. Basically, we had to carry the tapes. Somebody had to travel every day from here to Moscow or to Singapore, carrying those tapes! So you can imagine how difficult it is for an Indian company to do this and compete with multinationals like Star TV or CNN or BBC even where you stand. ... Because it's very unfair to compete with Star TV or CNN who are on their home grounds whereas *we*, we have to go *outside* like beggars, you know, in order to do this operation despite being in the business of broadcasting.[122]

This quote demonstrates what Pierre Bourdieu[123] defined as the symbolic power struggle that unfolds in social space when agents seek to position themselves within a particular relation to each other. The complex and highly dynamic urban milieu in which the careers of both Jain Studios and the BJP succeeded also enabled new agents and their products to enter and establish themselves as powerful players. Such a new entry could either destabilize or affirm another player's position. Relationships and forms of interaction therefore changed due to the forming of new alliances and rules, and the articulating of new interests and fashions.

Given this dynamic environment, Jain Studios' position was increasingly pushed to the periphery. On its own, Jain Studios did not have the financial capital to bring its own standards up-to-date with the latest technological equipment. In this respect, Jain Studios, once the market leader of alternative electronic media production equipped with state-of-the-art technology, as well as a front institution in terms of diversification of the political mediascape, experienced the two-faced nature of globalization. At the time fieldwork for this book was being conducted at Jain Studios, most of its almost one hundred employees had left voluntarily, been made redundant or were still working but had not received any salary for months. Those employees in particular who were once engaged in directing the production of issue-based videos, many of which related to the Ayodhya controversy, left the Studios to search for alternative career options. And certainly there are more options of this kind today than there were in the 1980s. While Matthew S, for example, temporarily set up his own small production company for election and commercial videos in the late 1990s, Rahul T, a cameraman and editor, took up work as a camera assistant for commercial feature films in Mumbai's Filmcity. With respect to the customer base, the situation at Jain Studios has changed as well, proving that politics is blind when it comes to business. Almost paradoxically, one of the most regular clients from within the political domain has been the Congress(I), which hired VOW vans for its election campaigns in 1997. However, political parties, especially individual or local candidates, cannot

afford the production and distribution fees any longer, primarily due to the Election Commission's restrictions on unauthorized campaign expenditures that were imposed in 1996.[124] VOW's best clients nowadays come predominantly from the booming commercial sector. This is where Jain Studios expects to make profits and even expand its activities, so that, according to VOW manager Ankur Jain, vans can be stationed in each of the roughly 460 districts of India.[125]

There were changes in the political landscape, too, that affected Jain Studios' and Dr J K Jain's position. In the late 1990s, Jain was still politically active. Yet a certain nostalgia covers the scene like a patina on an old photograph, for Jain's loyalty towards the party did not seem to be reciprocated. Rather, it appeared as if the former pioneer in political and media matters had been overtaken and left behind by the party. The BJP no longer relied on his services to popularize and distribute its programmes and manifestos. New players and technological facilities had entered the field of discourse and changed the frames of reference for political communication. As far as the use of electronic media is concerned, the BJP has moved on to other, quite possibly much better equipped producers than Jain Studios. It has widened the spectrum of media communication into the virtual domain of the world-wide-web (www.bjp.org), thereby reaching out to new audiences such as non-residential Indians, or NRIs, once again supported by Sangh Parivar allies such as the VHP and the RSS's global outfit, the HSS.

Furthermore, with the BJP leading the National Democratic Alliance since 1998, there seems to be no need to rely on an alternative mediascape as was the case in the late 1980s. The national government's apparatus provides controlling and mobilizing facilities of different dimensions and capacities in the home, the information and broadcasting and the education ministries.[126] On the non-parliamentary level, various RSS and VHP offices have begun to link up with a small milieu of local video producers, studios and web-masters. The latter are, with the support of HSS and VHP initiatives abroad, particularly involved in marketing Hindutva through the Internet, thus increasingly reaching out to Hindu audiences across the globe (see Epilogue).[127] The issue-based videos of Jain Studios are still available for sale in Sangh Parivar shops in Delhi. But half-forgotten, they are covered in thick layers of dust.

From centre-stage to periphery

To conclude this chapter, and to comment on the relationship between business and politics in the case of Jain Studios and J K Jain's political career, light must be cast on a subject in such a way that we may focus our attention on the rising tensions and deeper divisions that evolved within the RSS and the

BJP in the new millennium (see Epilogue). In October 2000, J K Jain found that he was being accused of being an agent of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) of Pakistan. In the light of Jain's involvement in RSS and BJP politics, particularly with respect to the Ayodhya controversy between 1989 and 1992, this accusation seems almost surreal. The report that triggered the rumour had been prepared by the governmental Research and Analysis Wing (RAW). Jain confronted the then Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and others in the government with a formal writ, discrediting the report and demanding both to be cleared of any suspicion and the dismissal of Brajesh Mishra, a former diplomat who had become the Prime Minister's principal secretary and National Security Adviser. Jain argued that Mishra was the driving force behind the report and it was speculated that Mishra's underlying intention was for Jain to vacate the landsite owned by the late BJP-leader Rajmata Scindia that had served as his studios' base for over a decade.[128]

In the early stage of the conflict, Jain enjoyed the support of then Home Minister L K Advani and other leaders of the Sangh Parivar, who demanded that Jain be cleared of the charge. J K Jain issued a legal notice and on November 5, 2000, his TV channel broadcast *Pardaphaash* (Exposé), a 'documentary' film supposedly providing evidence that Mishra and some of his relatives were involved in activities 'ranging from nepotism and corruption to jeopardizing national security',[129] 'facts' that were all denied by Mishra. With respect to the Rajya Sabha debate 1990/91, it has been mentioned above that J K Jain proclaimed that it was his duty and his right to inform the public about 'the truth', irrespective of who the accused was. In this case, he returned to this theme. Jain said in an interview with Indian magazine *The Week*: 'I must vindicate my honour and I must have the freedom to expose corrupt deals of people who are in public life. Right now our target is Mishra and we have enough material for the Prime Minister to have to sack Mishra'.[130] But Mishra was not sacked.

The series of allegations presented by Jain TV alerted the public to something that did not at all fit into the BJP's concept of presenting itself to the voters as the 'party with a difference'—that is, the only corruption-free party in the Indian political landscape. Jain's accusations on the issue of corruption within the party, and the government, were sidelined. Nevertheless, only a few months later, in March 2001, the BJP's credibility as a 'clean' party was to experience a major setback with the Tehelka corruption scandal linked to the military complex and the party leadership.[131] The RSS in particular used this political crisis to emphasize that only a return to the pure principles of Hindutva could reaffirm the credibility of its representatives in the NDA. With this appeal, the mother organization hoped to prevent the increasing 'dilution' of its principles due to the internal pressures faced by the Vajpayee government within the multi-party coalition.

The division between the RSS and the BJP, between hardliners and moderates, is also evident in another example. During the time of the Jain–Mishra controversy, J K Jain did not hesitate to criticize the Prime Minister in public. Jain TV launched another programme entitled 'We want national security and not a surrender before terrorism'. According to the daily newspaper *The Indian Express,* this was a clear move 'against Vajpayee's peace initiative in Kashmir', apparently backed by several RSS and BJP leaders.[132] In the programme, footage of a speech by Vajpayee at the BJP's National Security Rally in Delhi in 1990 was used to play up the tougher appearance of the political leader. This was an image that most probably found sympathizers among those hardliners in the Sangh Parivar who accused moderates like Vajpayee of trading Hindutva ideals for the sake of securing a stable coalition.[133] The RSS in particular asked for a firmer approach towards the resolution of the Kashmir conflict, in light of the special status granted to the state by means of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution as well as the tension-loaded relationship with Pakistan over the disputed border and claims of terrorist infiltration supported by the Pakistani government.[134]

Furthermore, in the light of Jain Studios' above-mentioned decline owing to a lack of updated technologies in the mid-1990s, it is interesting to note that *The Indian Express* refers to an attempt by the government in December 2000 to pacify Jain by granting him the licence for his latest project, Digital News International, 'a TV news agency and uplinking facility to his channel' from his software park in an industrial area of New Delhi.[135] Jain continued his provocative approach despite these negotiations. This in time meant that he not only came under massive attack from various angles within the political field but that even his previous allies withdrew their support. Finally, Jain was expelled from the BJP's National Executive on January 3, 2001 under the pretext of indiscipline.[136]

As argued above, this example is representative of a more dramatic shift, or even polarization of interests and alliances, within the Sangh Parivar and the government. Whether or not the news licence and uplinking rights were the main intention behind Jain's creation of a public spectacle is not for us to say here. But this example also shows that symbolic power is located on many levels and closely intertwined with economic capital and political interests. Possibly, Jain demanded too much by pushing forward his 'moral duty to inform', his status as a figure of important political rank within the BJP *and* at the same time asking for governmental concessions with respect to his own studios. The 'rogue' had finally fallen from grace. In March 2004, shortly before the Parliamentary Elections, Jain joined the Congress party to publicly state his critique of the NDA government, in particular, the BJP. In an interview for the news programme Rediff, its chief correspondent Tara Shankar Sahay asked Jain:

'Now that you have joined the Congress, surely your earlier moorings in the RSS must necessarily be shed?' Jains answer was: 'This is a difficult question. … Because human relations have many shades. Some are personal, some professional, some emotional and some political.'[137]

I address the mutual alliances and ties of solidarity and loyalty among members of the Sangh Parivar by quoting an RSS activist's comment on J K Jain: 'He is our common friend ... Everybody here is mutual friends. So actually, we do take help from each other.'[138] Yet, in the light of the symbolic battles surrounding politics-as-business and business-as-politics, the concepts of friendship and help take different shapes and shades. In order to better understand such and other claims to life-long loyalties and solidarity within the Sangh Parivar, the next chapter explores Hindutva's visions and practices with respect to the relationship between society and governance.

2

TRANSLATING METAPHORS OF NATION-BUILDING

The voice-over for a Jain Studios video entitled *The Making of a Chief Minister*[1] addresses potential political clients interested in marketing themselves with confident lines such as: 'If your target is victory, then your medium is VOW!' Equally, in my conversations with J K Jain and other employees of Jain Studios, the BJP's victories in Parliamentary and Assembly Elections were frequently attributed to the power of the Studios' facilities, in terms of both production and distribution.

These brief examples indicate the hopes and desires shared among several BJP representatives that political transformation could be successfully enhanced with the help of new media technologies, and that the videos produced by Jain Studios could have a strong impact on the audiences. As discussed in the previous chapter, it was in this way that the party sought to exploit new media technologies that had thus far been restricted through state monopolization. In the prologue to his work, *The Rise of Network Society*, Manuel Castells speaks of a similar interaction of technology, politics and society in the context of identity constitution and focuses on the question of the actual impact of media on social change. Emphasizing the role of the imaginary in socialization processes, he proposes that:

> . . . the inability of societies to master technology . . . largely shapes their destiny, to the point where we could say that while technology *per se* does not determine historical evolution and social change, technology (or the lack of it) embodies the capacity of societies to transform themselves, as well as the uses to which societies, always in conflictive process, decide to put their technological potential.[2]

On the basis of this statement, the 'conflictive processes' that appeared during the initial introduction of eletronic media to translate the Hindu Right's idealized versions of society and nationality into political practice (and vice versa) are explored. One such aspect was discussed in the previous chapter—that is, the different notions of communication means and audiences

that tend to create conflicts between an enclosed non-parliamentary organization such as the RSS and an essentially pragmatic and open organization such as the BJP. Yet, while the BJP has almost fatalistically projected essential unity and solidarity within the Hindu nation as ideal-typical notions of nationhood, it has actually increased the fragmentation of the people along communal and economic lines. Additionally, the party's spokespeople had to learn how to deal with the centrifugal forces of their centrist agenda owing to the almost unbridgeable regional, linguistic and social differences that can easily undermine visions of some grand unity of the nation. With the use of video technology, therefore, the gap between these sometimes-ambiguous realities that had shattered the political rhetoric could, so it was hoped, be closed.

This situation can be contextualized in terms of Stuart Hall's[3] discussion of representation and media. Arguing that images and audiovisual media help individual and collective agents to make identity claims, he points out two connected issues that are related to cultural production. The first is the importance of control over the means of representation by a social agent in order to create power and meaning, for example, by virtue of supporting and using a particular media production set-up and distribution network. This applies to the Hindu Right's relationship to Jain Studios in the 1980s and early 1990s (Chapter 1). The second issue is that of the constant tensions arising between virtuality and actuality in the process of an agent's attempt to negotiate credible political representations and 'reality' on the symbolic, aesthetic and performative level. These three levels shape what Hall calls a 'shared conceptual map' and a 'shared language' by which individuals and groups create and communicate consensus.[4] Through various means, the Sangh Parivar attempted to create images and metaphors of nationality so that a primordial essence would be conveyed. The underlying hope was that meaning and identity markers would only have to be 'represented', shown, as if they were part of a literal translation. Yet, as part of a discourse of power, meaning is created *in statu procedenti* and evolves in a particular context, and is finally constituted by the viewer.

Unlike the previous chapter, which examined the entwined relationship of Jain Studios and the BJP, placing the Studios' rise in the context of the rapid transformation of a protectionist and moral economy to a largely privatized and market-oriented economy in the 1980s, and the vital changes occurring in politics and the media at that time, this chapter focuses on particular metaphors and narratives used to explain the (self-)attributed relevance of Jain Studios in supporting the BJP's desire to claim 'ownership of the state'[5] and in capturing control over the imagination of the people as well as political power at the centre. The kind of metaphors and narratives that relate to Hindutva doctrine and political pragmatism, and particularly to the notions of national crisis and revolution, are discussed in the first section. The second

section of the chapter carries on the debate by considering the exploitation of the video media and Jain Studios as the 'people's voice' and part of a 'humanitarian mission' vis-à-vis that portrayed as the poor governance of the government in power. It touches upon the holistic and pedagogic concept of Hindutva as a moral doctrine for both society and state. The third section looks at how Jain Studios' videos sought to convey authority, camouflaged as 'information' and entertainment, and how this was emphasized not only by specific editing but also at content level—that is, through strategies of inclusion and exclusion, particularly with respect to notions of citizenship and leadership. The last section reflects on the Sangh Parivar spokespeople's approach to Jain Studios' pragmatic representation of certain of the Sangh Parivar groups' interests and agendas. Thus Sangh Parivar spokespeople's diverging opinions on the effectiveness of 'the media as message' are of relevance.

How and why were Jain Studios' videos expected to function and shape audience's visions of Hindutva as a 'way of life' by means of metaphors and media techniques? What can be said about Hindutva ideology's ideal-typical notion of the nation-state and civil society, and how these were translated into political metaphors that conveyed images of an intrinsically intimate and moralistic relationship between state and citizenry under Hindutva doctrine? How did these visions correspond with political and economic realities?

The evaluation is based on interviews conducted with J K Jain, employees of Jain Studios and Hindutva spokespeople, the writings of various Hindutva leaders and the Jain Studios videos *The Making of a Chief Minister* (1989) and *Towards a Cheerful Revolution* (1990). Owing to the fact that the fieldwork was conducted once the key task of Jain Studios video production—that of alerting and mobilizing people for Hindutva's agenda, with respect to the Ayodha controversy around 1990—was over, empirical material on audience responses could not be collected for an examination of the videos' effects.[6] However, it will be argued that an exploration of the production and distribution contexts of Jain Studios' videos by way of personal interviews with producers, commissioners and other social agents who were directly or indirectly linked to Jain Studios between 1989 and 1993, provides substantive insights into the ways in which the audiences were *imagined* and the discursive strategies of representation of which they were part. This is relevant to a discussion of the key issues of both Hindutva doctrines and pragmatic politics. Throughout this book, reference will thus be made to 'imagined' viewers and audiences. The intention behind this follows the proposition that, despite Hindutva spokespeople's self-representation as a people's movement, there was, particularly in the late 1980s and early 1990s, little recognition of people's concerns and desires that exceeded ideologues' and party spokespeople's concerns over their own expansion of power. Audiences were imagined as homogenous, ideal-typical entities that could easily be fitted into the Hindutva

rhetoric of the Hindu people as a moral community. Likewise, Jain Studios' videos were imagined to be influential tools of political mobilization or indoctrination. This was due to the new possibilities that had emerged with the elaboration of an alternative media landscape in the 1980s (Chapter 1). Modifications regarding video technology's desired effects were, as will be discussed in the last section of this chapter, only made in relation to particular cases of mobilization. Altogether, the Hindutva agents involved in the various processes of representation showed little concern about the actual reception of this kind of political mobilization tool. By the mid-1990s the BJP had not conducted any surveys on audience response to the political videos they disseminated, nor had RSS and VHP speakers articulated much interest in the possible failure of their messages. The presupposition was that the videos' messages would be received uncritically by their audiences. The high degree of ignorance among certain Indian politicians creates a 'communication gap' between sender and audience that has, in various forms, framed the colour and usage of political media and mobilization strategies ever since India's independence.[7] This gap still influences the idea of political representation today, including the wishful thinking that the media have a direct impact on an audience that desires to be told who they are and what they want.

Although this book is entitled *Empowering Visions*, it is not so much to do with the various ways in which Jain Studios' videos might have actually mobilized supporters, for the actual impact of the media at the time of their production and distribution cannot be explored *a posteriori*. Applying Castells' comment above, I instead aim to address Hindutva spokespeople's attempts to use video as a means to create both symbolic and political power, through which they appeal to the viewers to pay attention to and identify with the ideas and interests communicated in the videos. In the field of representation, particular concepts of society and righteous governance played key roles.

The video media's journey from 'national crisis' to 'cheerful revolution'

Castells' aforementioned quote comes very close to the ways in which Jain Studios, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, came to take up a central position, especially in the BJP spokespeople's attempts to exploit electronic media such as video, to challenge the contemporary centrist government and reshape national politics to its advantage. The transformative power inherent in the section-heading's wording, 'from crisis to revolution', suggests the potential of metaphors to invoke ideas of transformation, direction and purpose. Multiple meanings can also be projected into such a space. So, for example, on the basis of projecting Hindutva ideology as the essence of the purportedly legitimate state authority, the agents involved in the production of the videos presented



Figure 7 Village children attending a VOW-screening. Still from *The Making of a Chief Minister.*

video media as a tool in the service of the people, just as they imagined their audiences as passive receivers only waiting to be 'awakened'—as if, said a former Jain Studios employee about the envisaged impact of *Videos-on-Wheels*, 'the well comes to the thirsty' (Figure 7).

To understand the two-pronged approach of producing and using media to challenge national politics and to 'awaken' and shape society, some key metaphors of Hindutva ideology require our attention, as they came to constitute easily comprehended symbols, enabling spokespeople to manufacture credible images and narratives. These are the metaphors of fraternity and divine kingship. Through them, Hindutva ideologues elaborated and further exploited ideal-typical notions of and relationships between the nation-state and society, in order to mobilize support. For example, they have proved themselves adequate tools for the dramatization of relationships between society, imagined as a fragmented or collapsing body, and alleged governmental deficiencies (e.g. weakness, corruption). The key strategy behind this polarization was that the idea of threat required the addressees to identify with the projected idea of brotherhood. Only then could audience perceptions be loaded with further notions of threat and fear.

Images of crisis and fear operate at the centre-stage of Hindu Right rhetoric and political activities. In fact, many radical social movements carry the signature of such images, as demonstrated by Schiffauer in his analysis of

orthodox Islamic groups in Germany.[8] For them, ideas of revolutionary agency and political transformation can be credibly legitimized when they are presented in environments that suggest a state of emergency. As a consequence of this dramatized context, Hindutva ideologues and pragmatists were able to claim sovereignty by discrediting the previous players in charge of holding power. The main aim behind the BJP's move onto the political platform was an idea shared by many think tanks from within the rather enclosed milieus of the RSS or VHP. Once central power was captured, national consciousness could be raised and/or transformed within larger segments of society by using new audiovisual media more extensively.

Exploiting metaphors as a crucial part of their rhetoric, and dramatizing them in the specific domain of video media, J K Jain, his studios and their videos enabled the Sangh Parivar, especially its political wing, the BJP, to point a finger at vulnerable areas of governance, thereby enhancing notions of the people as a 'wounded' and helpless body. The claim was made that only Hindutva ideology and the BJP—as representatives of this ideology—could 'heal' the crisis-torn, collapsing nation. The party promised to reinstate social harmony and economic stability by means of 'true' secular and moral conduct and by reintroducing territorial unity and security.

Metaphors of crisis are particularly valuable weapons for parties in the opposition. Being in just such a situation served the BJP well, for during this time of gearing up for confrontation it was 'learning by doing'. This entailed using democracy and its institutions (parliament, courts, constitution, etc.) as the backdrop against which BJP representatives translated what should, in many ways, be understood as undemocratic ideas and interests, based on supposed primordial cultural supremacy and the claim for preferential treatment of the Hindu 'majority', especially the middle classes. In less than a decade, from its foundation in 1980, the BJP managed to become a major opposition party,[9] ultimately forming a large, governmental coalition in 1998, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). By referring to democracy, the BJP, in its navigation between orthodox RSS doctrines and market-oriented pragmatism, twisted rather than enhanced the ideal of democracy.[10] Jain Studios is just one of many twists and turns taken on this journey.

Metaphors of crisis I: the collapsing nation

One of the central metaphors through which the Sangh Parivar attempted to lever itself into the public domain and increase its power of rhetoric was that of the collapsing nation. Political, economic and social transformations had enabled the BJP to exploit already established fields of conflict and begin to create new ones. Sometimes these were states of emergency through which it would formulate deep crises of (secular) governance and national identity

based on social fragmentation and politico-economic disharmony. J K Jain commented on the 'institutionalization' of Hindutva:

> Building an institution is much higher a goal than to serve your own party interests. You can serve your party interests in so many *other* ways. But *building of values* is more than that. And in India, I believe, *things are trembling down* . . . it leads to a disappointment, and the whole country is collapsing.[11]

Political metaphors such as the 'collapsing' nation(-state) are meant to convey a purpose and a means, with corresponding values and aims, and to bring life an abstraction of concepts connected to state and society. Correspondingly, they serve to make complex notions or ideas simpler, much as J K Jain's definition of political videos as 'packaged capsules'.

'Collapse' presupposes the existence of an organism that can disintegrate. Very often, political rhetoric creates and employs familial and somatic metaphors such as the state as father and guide, the nation as a mother and the citizenry as the children. Moreover, the metaphors relate seemingly unconnected elements of parts of an organism to each other, so that the idea of an overall 'natural' order, or a social contract based on solidarity, can evolve and be sealed at once.[12] Physical experiences and feelings can thus be quite easily associated with and projected onto those personifications. This is why the metaphors of 'breakdown' and 'collapse' have re-entered the arena of Hindutva politics in the 1980s: they were required to partake in a spectacle that appealed to the audience's desires (for participation in and access to power) and fears (of fragmentation and discrimination). The suggestive metaphor of the crisis-torn, collapsing nation was a key concept used repeatedly in Jain Studios videos, fieldwork interviews and the printed material that circulated within the Sangh Parivar. It was employed to legitimize the idea of an urgent need for transformation by means of collective solidarity and action. In the case of J K Jain, the notion of social transformation addressed the political institution of the state, criticizing it for lacking an overarching value-system. His words invoke ideas of political change on at least two levels. At the level of doctrine they project an ethical transformation of the nation-state and civil society, while at the level of pragmatic politics, a change of government is suggested. The metaphorical counter-image that offered a solution to the crisis of the 'collapsing nation' came to be that of the Hindu fraternity.

Hindu brotherhood as moral community

> When we are all children of Bharat Mata (Mother India) and therefore brothers, there is no reason for dividing us on the basis of caste and feelings of high and low.[13]

This quote by an RSS ideologue illustrates that in Hindutva doctrine, the citizenry is imagined both along a vertical axis, that is, children towards their mother, and a horizontal axis, that is, as a fraternity of equals. Hindutva ideology projects society as a body or tree, made up of interdependent parts and branches, each element firmly positioned and fulfilling its assigned function and thus ensuring a harmonious equilibrium of forces. This metaphor allowed the BJP's key slogan of 'one culture, one people, one nation' to be projected alongside another political slogan, 'unity in diversity'.

The somatic idea of social unity is both partly a reinterpretation and a fusion of the ancient, *vedic* model of the 'Supreme man' (*vastu purusha*), Greek Antiquity ideas of Plato's state and European Romanticism (here, in particular, the nation as mother and the citizens as her sons; see Chapters 4, 6). Manifest in the ancient treatise of the Rig Veda (*purusha sukta*), and used both as a cosmological diagram for social engineering and in sacred architecture (e.g., *Arthashastra*), the concept of unity in diversity symbolises the unity of microcosm and macrocosm, as well as that of social, moral and material order and harmony.[14] In the Rig Veda, each of the four main social segments (*varna*) is allocated a part of the body of the primeval man; the mouth (Brahmin), arms (Kshatriya), cosmic order and thighs (Vaishya), and feet (Shudra). All parts are said to be bound together by mutual agreement. If one part stops functioning, or attempts to adapt functions of another part and thus refuses to uphold the contract, the whole body can be weakened and finally collapse. Following from this metaphor is the assumption that every member of the nation-state as an organism has to perform his or her duties according to the respective 'given' requirements of both the whole body and of his own part. This idea of collective responsibility indicates that in the case of reneging on the given rules or with the emergence of new 'limbs' from within or outside the organism, microcosm and macrocosm will be disturbed.

In the context of Hindutva rhetoric, the metaphor of fraternity has become a useful model, used to suggest the need to prevent further collapse and to unite against those forces conditioning the (moral and social) organism's 'fragmentation'. It appears ideal in that it caters to ethical, ideological and political demands alike. According to Hindutva ideology, the fundamental concept that guarantees order and balance of the nation as brotherhood is *dharma*.[15] The central point of this treatise on social and ritual duties and laws derives from a reinterpretation and vernacularization of ancient *vedic* scriptures (*dharmashastras*) for modern requirements and politics. Hindutva spokespeople's claim is that *dharma* has to be recognized and respected by every individual and group as an 'essential' element of Hindutva Indianness—no matter what caste, class *and* religion they belong to. Having internalized *dharma* as the supreme order, the ideal-typical citizen-as-devotee would step onto the path of self-discovery and liberation. It is here that Hindutva can

present itself as both a mystical (inner-worldly) path and a political (mundane) path for those seeking individual and collective 'truth'. Seshadri Chari, the editor of the weekly *Organiser* said:

> Hindutva ideology is like a deposit of gold. It is for you to go and dig and get whatever you get out of it . . . It is a treasure house. The gates are open. If you refuse to enter, we don't ask the people to go and enter, we can not push them into it.[16]

Returning to the above comment by Hall on representation, this quote demonstrates the attempt to present Hindutva as both a shared cartography and shared language. The key formulas for the discourse of Hindutva as ongoing self-discovery and defence against a whole range of threats, have been, to a large extent, provided in such writings as Hindu Mahasabha leader, Veer Savarkar's *Hindutva—Who is a Hindu?* (1923), and RSS activist and Jana Sangh leader, Deendayal Upadhyaya's ideology of *Integral Humanism* (1965). Both authors engaged in the translation of ideas relating to an authoritarian and highly interventionist welfare state, and a citizenry that they portrayed as largely devout and grateful recipients of Hindutva ideals and duties. 'Awakening' (*jagriti)* or jagaran was one of the central notions employed by them to focus attention on the 'revolutionary' transformation process from oppressed citizens into enlightened (and militarized) national fraternity, inhabiting Hindutva's 'treasure house'.

In post-colonial India, Upadhyaya's work became a crucial source of inspiration BJP rhetoric, defining what became known as the 'Third Way'. This holistic concept of an organic society enabled negotiations on the relationship between civil society and the nation-state on the grounds of Hindu philosophy, particularly concerning notions of oneness of mind, body, intellect and soul.[17] In maintaining that the nation itself possesses the same elements that make up a person, the 'Third Way' pursued the idea that the Indian nation, to maintain its oneness, required firm guidance in through values, rules and leadership. The 'Third Way' was presented as the only indigenous alternative to the previous, but alleged failing, foreign ideologies of socialist federalism and capitalism, both of which were stigmatized and rejected as global forms of human exploitation.[18] Opposed to these purportedly alien models of society, the 'Third Way' proposed a chain of harmoniously connected social elements that aligned the individual, family, society and nation-state as part of a single organism, like pearls on a string. The RSS cadre organization, understood as a well-structured model for the brotherhood of *swayamsevaks,* came to be defined as the ideal of this organism.

In *Integral Humanism,* Upadhyaya politicized the idea of fraternity by providing a link between collective awakening and radical political action in

the context of nation building. Upadhyaya associated nationality not only with a body and a morale, but also with a history (Hindu Rashtra, or ancient Hindu nation), a destiny and *chiti*, that is, the innate national soul or natural character of the nation.[19] Both national mind and soul must undergo awakening before *dharma rajya* (the rule of moral conduct in state politics) can be achieved. The vision of society as an organism, and nationhood as passionate, self-sacrificial devotion to the state, enabled Hindutva ideologues to place society as directly dependent on the nation-state. The Indian people could be presented in their life-long duty to protect the nation's morale. In fact, one could say that within Hindutva ideology, citizenship was defined both by individual and group recognition of *dharma* as a guiding principle for state governance as well as legitimization of a particular social group's exclusion on the basis of national dedication. Upadhyaya proclaimed that: 'Anyone who abandons Dharma, betrays the nation'.[20] Reinterpreting the importance of *dharma* as a locus of nationality, RSS ideologue and BJP senior leader, K R Malkani, states in his book *The RSS Story*: 'The true Dharma of a man is to do his duties—whatever they are—to the best of his ability, and not to think of 'high' and 'low'. All work is worship and must be done in a worshipful spirit'.[21] In this ideal-typical concept, person-hood and nation-hood are said to be acquired by means of recognition of duties towards the nation, thus eliminating social and ritual differences within the Hindu fold, and making such actions sacred. The importance of sacred nationality becomes particularly obvious with respect to the Hindutva concept of martyrdom (Chapter 6).

Yet there are other metaphors that also require consideration.

Metaphors of crisis II: peoples' yearning for freedom of expression

In several interviews, J K Jain spoke of the present and created scenarios filled with metaphors of loss, oppression and threats to freedom. By monopolizing the electronic media the secular governments, so his argument went, had until now suppressed the people's most basic human right of free speech and self-expression, thereby demonstrating their 'anti-people attitude' (J K Jain). In contrast, Jain Studios' activities sound almost like guerrilla tactics when J K Jain, speaking on centrist media politics, polarizes government politics and civil consensus in the following commentary:

> We [the BJP] feel very strongly about the anti-people attitude adopted by people with vested interests within the government. Freedom of expression is the birthright of every Indian and not just of the Prime Minister and certain bureaucrats. . . . The government feels that the security of the nation will be in grave danger if the electronic media is given the same degree of rights as the print media.[22]

Maintaining that Hindutva spokespeople and organizations were leading a revolutionary movement of the people, the BJP employed *VOW* in particular, and other alternative media networks, such as semi-public screenings organized by Sangh Parivar activists, to spread its agenda among audiences.

To promote *VOW* as a tool in alternative communication, Jain Studios produced two videos called *The Making of a Chief Minister* and *Towards a Cheerful Revolution*. Both videos frame the vision of a crisis-bound nation filled with the desire for transformation but prevented from achieving this by the inadequate, centrist politics of governmental representation in the arenas of politics and economic development. A central suggestion underlying the video scripts is that the nation had been and still was being withheld from self-empowerment. It is insinuated that the Indian people are hindered from 'awakening' and uniting by the government in power because it does not want to give up its power monopoly and instead continues to misinform and fragment society. A lineage of loss of freedom is created when the prevention of the people's self-realization is traced back, via colonialism, to the Mughal invasion and to a pre-Mughal mythic origin. This narrative mirrors a popular argument of the Hindu Right, that ongoing exploitation of the land as well as cultural devastation have turned India into a country that is drained of its manifold resources and potential. Inscribed in this concept of the 'nation-as-lack' is the image of a 'backward' India that has, despite the enthusiasm of the young developmental state of the 1950s and 1960s, failed because of wrong governance. This is the context from which the first montage of *Towards a Cheerful Revolution* evolves, in which we see images of families living in poverty and paralysed by resignation. A peculiar 'metaphorical' view in this sequence of scenes is that of a young child carrying a rope around her neck with which she attempts to lift a brick (Figure 8). In the video, the voice-over commentary introduces a narrative of an Arcadia versus an ongoing crisis: 'India: a land rich in culture, history and traditions. A rich nation where poor people live . . . Can this be changed? . . . We [Jain Studios] have devised a media strategy with which the gulf that separates government . . . from the people, can be bridged.'

The mention of the gulf between people and government calls attention to the Hindutva spokespeople's claim that the Western concept of secularism, adopted from the colonizers, has only led to further disintegration and foreign domination of the country.[23] Independence could have allowed the young nation-state to revive its glory, and could have reinstated India as a proud and recognized nation among the international assembly. But due to irresponsible and selfish governance, exercised through the ongoing politics of appeasement, or 'pampering', of religious and other minorities by means of reservation policies, the state has instead provoked further social fragmentation and misrepresentation of the 'Hindu majority'.[24]

Pseudo-secularism versus Hindutva's 'positive secularism'

The idea of Hindu awakening and fraternity is directly linked to notions of governance. Hindutva spokespeople attribute every possible problem that could haunt a nation-state: the high percentage of poverty and illiteracy, the state apparatus and a political system eroded by corruption, communalism and a moral decline of politicians and society, to 'pseudo-secularism'. Commenting on the Indian mediascape, J K Jain stated in an interview with the weekly *Blitz* that, 'the colonial era may be over, but the colonial domination of our media—and of our minds through the media—has continued.'[25] The media landscape is often used as a barometer of the political situation; and here too, the metaphor of 'colonization of the minds' finds metaphorical association with secularism.

Hindutva spokespeople concurred that in order to prevent a national breakdown ideas of governance required serious revision, particularly with respect to the key controversial concept of secularism. It is important to note that the 'vessel' was allowed to remain intact while the contents were to be substituted. The BJP does not reject the idea of secularism. Yet it demands the constitution of a 'positive secularism', that is, an indigenized version of the western 'model'.[26] The latter, it is argued, failed because it proved inadequate for the Indian context. The disputes on secularism revolve around what Partha Chatterjee outlines as the three characteristics of a secular state: the principle of liberty (the right to practise religion); the principle of equality (no preferential



Figure 8 'Carrying the burden of the developmental state'. Still from *Towards a Cheerful Revolution.*

treatment of one religion or particularist group over another) and the principle of neutrality (the state must not privilege religion over non-religion).[27] Hindutva ideologues claim that the governments in power did not follow these principles but instead subverted them. They argue that this so-called 'pseudo-secularism' (*dharma-nirpekshata*) harms rather than ensures the welfare of the (Hindu) people.[28] Hindutva, however, cherishes the principles of liberty, equality and neutrality, and could therefore guarantee the wellbeing of the population through 'positive secularism'. Rather than being hollow, vote-winning pillars, secularism's principles must be embedded in culturally specific codes of moral conduct (*dharma*; *sarvadharma-sambhava*[29]). To appear both credible and democratic, Hindutva was presented as a humanitarian rather than a sectarian ideology. Furthermore, its supporters were portrayed as essentially tolerant rather than aggressive. In contrast, the various secular governments in power since independence, were blamed for being undemocratic and communalist.

The video media as the 'people's voice'

Proclaiming to challenge the government's alleged politics of blocking the country's development the openness of its media and its people's minds, Jain Studios successfully presented itself as a speaker of and for civil society. Civil society is commonly defined as a social concept guaranteeing the protection and consolidation of democracy, a condition typically established under the support of government. However, civil society also requires inertia from the non-governmental societal domain in which diverse groups of people negotiate their normative and material interests on the basis of recognition of equality and fair play. This recognition creates *volonté générale*, or civil consensus. The government, as the democratically elected representative of society, has the duty to recognize the people's will and structure its political agency accordingly.[30]

The following discussion of the role of video media as the 'people's voice' demonstrates how Hindutva spokespeople have developed a rhetoric that camouflages these ideal-typical ideas of a social, mutual contract between civil society and government. Often, metaphors of a helpless and infantile citizenry relying on a strong, paternal leadership were employed to authorize a communication medium, such as Jain Studios, as a 'mouthpiece' of both the Sangh Parivar and the citizenry. Only under the leadership of the Sangh so allegations, could the citizenry stage its protest. Public events were the ideal means to suggest that 'the Hindu people' as an entity could be rallied behind the cause of Hindutva. Countless shots of such gatherings and displays of anger in Jain Studios' 'information videos' confirm the relevance of making



Figure 9 Manifestation of the 'people's will'. A demonstration in Delhi organized by the BJP against Article 370. Still from A *Cheerful Revolution*.

the 'people's voice' visible in order to legitimize Hindutva as a mass movement (Figure 9). The citizenry became a mouthpiece that, although it appeared to be 'bilingual', predominantly translated the 'master's voice'. Such a 'monolinguism' imagined the people as essentially speechless and incapable of representing themselves. In some ways this was correct, for access to and representation through the media at that time was not readily available to everybody. More important, however, is that the use of these metaphors reflected an ambiguous relationship between Hindutva ideologues, the state and society, as shall now be explored.

The citizen as a silenced victim of poor governance

J K Jain linked the activities of his studios to the task of protecting and speaking up for the universal human right of free speech by defining Jain Studios as a tool of self-empowerment and part of a democratizing process that could enable the creation of common consensus and welfare. In this way, Jain Studios could be turned into a civic institution that represented a particular community's claims and concerns in opposition to the current government's policies. Based on the alleged crises of nationhood and governance, this enabled the enactment of a chain of interconnected think-images, through which the relationship between government and civil society could be portrayed as one of culprit versus victim, oppressor versus oppressed or traitor versus betrayed. Such images could be easily imagined, narrated and dramatized.

The secular government, so the accusation went, had failed to grant basic constitutional rights to the citizens. It was further blamed for leaving particular groups vulnerable and unprotected in the case of attack by other social agents, and for enhancing the discrimination of particular groups despite secularism's principles of equality and neutrality. J K Jain (JKJ) explained, in this excerpt from a personal interview:

> JKJ: There was once a violence in a village . . . The village is known as Malyana. It is a Muslim village. There was a dispute between the Border Security Forces and the inhabitants of that village. Many Muslims had been killed in this fight with the police. I, being a media man, I raised my voice against that also. I was the only person, and Jain Studios was the only organisation which sent people there to make a film and raise a voice against the atrocity. I said: 'This is a human rights violation in our country'. I say with humility and full conviction that when I depict the injustice done to Hindus in Ayodhya, Sikhs in Delhi or the Muslims in Malyana, I am not looking at them as Hindus, Muslims or Sikhs. *I am looking at them as human beings, as Indians and poor citizens against the mighty state.*
>
> CB: So the film becomes the mouthpiece of the people?
>
> JKJ: At least, if they convey the message, they tell the people, 'this is what has been done'. Now I have my own deposit of resources. I therefore can't do as much work as I would like to do. But *I do want to use this potential of video technology for protection of human rights and for improving the quality of life for my country*.[31]

Here, Jain fused several different incidents in which government forces, usually police or the paramilitary, intervened in civil life on the basis of alleged subversion of, and attacks on, state power from members of a particular ethnic group in the 1980s and early 1990s. His reference to Sikhs in Delhi, for example, concerns the pogroms, largely conducted by Hindu citizens and members of the police force, against members of the Sikh communities in Delhi after the assassination of Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards in 1984.[32] The government of the day did not instantly introduce steps to protect the Sikh community, and only on the third day of anti-Sikh rioting did Rajiv Gandhi finally appeal to the people through Doordarshan to end the violence. This event not only left a scar in the Sikh memory, but also highlighted their general suspicions about the government's legitimacy and neutrality, thus viewing it as a biased agent unwilling to protect all its citizens alike due to its own concerns and centrist interests.

Having declared himself both a citizen and a politician of an opposition party courageously pointing out the weaknesses and injustices performed by different governments in power, Jain further related the tension between state and people to the Ayodhya controversy where violent clashes took place between the government and Hindutva supporters, particularly in 1990 (see Chapter 6). This example differs from the previous one insofar as the Hindutva organizations openly provoked the government into action by asking them to persuade Muslims to hand over the site to its 'legitimate owners'—the 'Hindu people'. Jain, however, for the purpose of challenging the government, identified the Ayodhya controversy with a revolutionary movement for human rights. He projected a perspective that related the Ayodhya controversy with the right to practise religious belief, in this case, Hindu worship. This association enabled him to reject accusations of practising communalist politics. In the following quote J K Jain completely ignores the provocative agitation of Hindutva supporters against Muslim groups, and the fact that referrals to Hindu worship were primarily camouflaging tactics that enabled Hindutva ideologues to introduce a rather inflammatory rhetoric of cultural nationalism. If they appeared to be removed from the domain of political agitation, supporters of the Sangh Parivar could be presented as peaceful devotees of Lord Ram. While speaking of an incident in Ayodhya in 1990, where Hindutva representatives clashed with paramilitary forces sent by the central and the state governments, J K Jain argued:

> You see, these people who were the followers of Ram, they were carrying out a *peaceful procession*. They were not breaking any laws or getting violent. And mercilessly they were beaten, selectively they were shot. But why? The country's constitution or the law does not empower the police to fire or beat citizens just because they're expressing their viewpoint. You may disagree with their viewpoint but would you *suppress* a dissenting opinion with bullets and battles in the manner it was done in Ayodhya? *That* was the issue! . . . . In India, I believe that *real* Indianness or *real* Hindutva means equal respect for all religions.[33]

Jain's reasoning was that the government's obligation to ensure the citizens' safety had not been upheld, and that in both cases civilians had been turned into victims of inhumane government politics. He also contended that performing one's religious belief in public, as allegedly done by the *kar sevaks* in Ayodhya, demanded respect—as a basic human right—and must not be treated as a 'criminal act'. The domains of religious practice and political agitation were consciously blurred. The first was used to shelter the latter, that is, culturally specific ideologies and political interests were interpreted as straight articulations of religious faith. In this way, the government could be

accused of discriminating against the Hindu people on the basis of their religious identity, giving preferment to the interests of Muslim groups (by not handing over the Babri mosque) through 'politics of appeasement' in order to gain political advantage.

If we follow Jain's accusations, two pillars of secularism were ostensibly ignored by the government, thus putting 'real' secularism at stake. One was the principle of liberty, which prevents the state from interfering in religious matters such as worship. The second referred to the heated debate on the principle of equality, which obliges the state not to discriminate against any group on the basis of religion or caste. The problem with this case arises in the context of minority politics. The Indian Constitution grants certain rights and privileges, such as access to education and government jobs through reservation politics, which awards, to use Partha Chatterjee's words, 'special provisions for the advancement of socially and educationally backward classes or for scheduled castes and tribes'.[34] Yet over the years, the state's entanglement with religious affairs has only increased, particularly since the 1980s when Congress(I) used the issues of caste and religion for the purpose of its election campaigning and due to minorities positioning themselves more confidently in the public and political domain by using their 'minority card'. Hence, the democratic process in India has, until the time of writing, failed to grow in tandem with the secularization of the public sphere, that would, as Nehru once expected, 'naturally' lead to a decrease of claims to minority rights. Instead, there has been a boost in the instrumentalization of communal identities on various levels of national politics.[35] This is where the BJP has come to outline its critique of secularism as a practice of 'pampering' or 'appeasement' of minorities, arguing that this practice has lead to communalism. One addressee of this critique is the government. But it also addresses the spokespeople of those minority groups who have purportedly selfishly claimed privileged treatment, as in the case of the Muslim Personal Law,[36] which has fallen victim to this critique as Muslims have been seen as abusing their legal privileges as a minority.

Creating visions of 'unity in diversity'

The issue of the particular rights of religious minorities has caused a reaffirmation of colonial stereotypes and, in the context of Hindutva politics, has led to a particularly violent discourse on national identity and citizenship. In its election manifestos, the BJP instead proposes a unified civil code tailored predominantly to the *volonté générale* of the so-called majority of Indian people—read, the Hindus. Attempting to monopolize power in order to define civil rights and citizenship reflected the BJP's vision of a morally and culturally united nation, one which invites the assimilation of cultural differences under

the common national denominator of Hindu culture. This is echoed in J K Jain's statement 'We may be Hindus, we may be Muslims, we may be Christians, but the fact remains that *we are all Indians*'.[37] In his above narrated anecdotes of the Delhi riots and Ayodhya conflict, Jain merged members of different ethnic groups under the common denominators of civil society, brotherhood and 'unity in diversity', suggesting that they had all been victimized under 'pseudo-secularist' politics. In light of this alleged crisis of national identity, Jain Studios offered itself as a tool through which all citizens would be encouraged to unite under the BJP's all-embracing slogan of 'one nation, one culture, one people'.

Responding to the criticism of fragmentation of society through 'pseudo-secular' governance, the BJP came to project the notion of (Hindu) fraternity as an ideal model to create 'unity in diversity'. The nation as a moral community became a forceful metaphor to play with, particularly in terms of transgressing caste and social differences within Hindu society, as the above quotes of K R Malkani and Rama Jois suggest.

Being asked not to think of 'high' and 'low' brings us to a crucial problem faced by Hindutva spokespeople, particularly in finding a common denominator that would enable a homogenization of India's diverse and hierarchical society into the more horizontal networks of fraternity. The metaphor of 'fraternity' appears particularly useful when considering that India is made up of a multitude of castes and sub-castes, varying according to regional and neighbourhood contexts. Examples include citizens that belong to various religions, such as Sikhism, Jainism, Islam, Christianity or Buddhism, or their belonging to other, subaltern groups, each with its own system of beliefs and ritual practices and economic networks. There are additionally more than a dozen major languages and thousands of regional dialects, and each region has its own unique history of loyalty to a broad range of 'things that matter', things that the nation as a whole does not necessarily identify with, and aspects that make identification with the nation only secondary .

The 'political career' of the fraternity metaphor can be traced back to the early days of the French Republic, where it was part of a socio-political transformation from which the modern concepts of nation-state and civil society emerged. In the context of the French Revolution, political scientist Herfried Münkler focused his attention on the fact that fraternity was given preference over the concepts of freedom and equality, as it was perceived as an ideal that transgressed traditional social hierarchies and loyalties forming a horizontal form of socialization.[38] With the help of this metaphor, the inherent fragmentation of Indian Hindu society through caste hierarchies could be temporarily circumvented and 'neutralized'—in rhetoric at least.

In his pamphlet *Hindutva* (1923), Veer Savarkar claimed that all castes should be transcended by the sole caste of Hinduness. For him, the Hindu

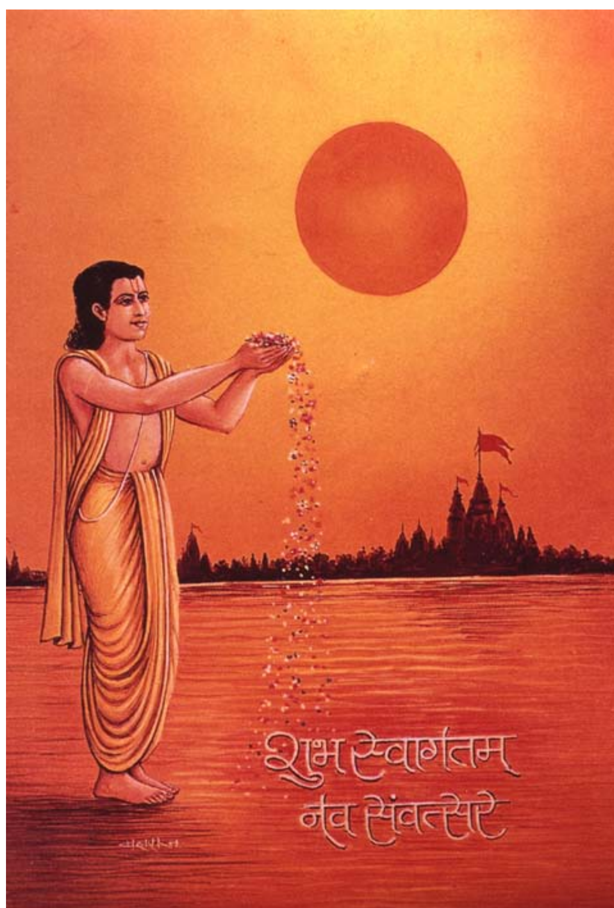


Figure 10 *Deshbhakta*: The 'ideal' national devotee. Sangh Parivar New Year Card (1990s), designed by Balraj. Private collection.

nation was a race,[39] united by the same culture and the same blood: 'We, Hindus, are all one and a nation, because chiefly of our common blood'—'Bharati Santati'.[40] Hindutva was not only Hindu religion, but 'cultural unity and civic life',[41] and most of all, an essence that would unite all Hindus by means of their selfless devotion to the country. A central icon of this national devotion is the image of the Hindu devotee immersed in prayer at a riverbank, as portrayed on the Sangh Parivar New Year card (Figure 10). Yet, the following chapters explore the notion that peaceful devotion does not suffice; crisis is another meta-narrative used to invoke desire for the transgression of social barriers. The unity of the Hindus-as-fraternity requires a more dramatic image for emotive mobilization, for example, that of the *deshbhakta* (devotee to the



Figure 11 Drawing depicting a historical battle of the Hindu people. Still from *GMH.*

country) dying in battle (Figure 11). (The importance of attachment to the country is explored in detail in Chapters 4 and 6.) To convey the message of Hindu oneness, Savarkar even introduced public *shuddhi* ceremonies, that is, the staging of rituals of 'reconversion' to Hinduism by Christians, Muslims and Dalit.[42] BJP senior leader K R Malkani addresses this issue in his book *The RSS Story* (1980). Here, caste is affirmed as a moral and social principle which creates order 'out of the chaos of races, religions and languages', through its relation to *dharma*.[43] Furthermore, Malkani retorts that the 'RSS does not recognise caste . . . And yet, it does not go about declaring war on caste . . . RSS looks upon caste as a historic institution that has played its historic role, but today is irrelevant and must go.[44] This quote reveals a demand for a forced, rather than a voluntary brotherhood, a demand that becomes even more urgent with the steady realization of heterogeneity within the crowd of 'brothers' and in the context of the dramatization of a 'threatening Other' (Chapters 3–6).

Furthermore, within this context, each citizen is imagined as selflessly giving up the potential privileges resulting from his or her social and economic status, endorsing the idea of a national brotherhood instead. The metaphor of forced fraternity thus provides the BJP with the means of upholding its critique of 'appeasement' politics with respect to minority rights and statist reservation politics. We shall see later that the idea of caste as a unifying model of Hindutva cultural identity did not imply a critical inquiry into caste hierarchy as such (Chapter 5), even though Hindutva ideology claimed to privilege 'common blood, culture, law and ritual' over caste.[45]

Video messages to 'improve the quality of life'

Some of the above quotes from interviews with J K Jain indicate an underlying identification of secularism with the ostensible underdevelopment and backwardness of the Indian nation. This idea links with that of Nehruvianism, where the nation-state is perceived as a developmental state, one based on a national economy and refraining from getting too involved in cultural and religious matters. That communal harmony and civil maturity should naturally follow from economic stability was the hope of the representatives of the young nation-state. Both ideals were seen as eroded by the experience of colonialism.

Interestingly enough, Hindutva spokespeople and doctrines reversed the above argument: economic stability could only evolve from communal harmony and requires a rootedness in cultural identity that acknowledges Hindutva as an ideal moral and political purveyor of conduct for governance and citizenry. According to J K Jain, his studios carried out the 'mission' of persuading the Indian people to participate in the celebration of such an identity, a sort of 'cheerful revolution'. This envisaged linear process was invoked through notions of crisis, in which India and her people were attributed with feelings of loss and inferiority ('backward', 'Third World' country). These notions were dramatized through a set of Indian attributes generally associated with spiritual growth: essentially tolerant, ancient and rich.

When one reads Jain's following elaboration on the potential role of video in India—including his own involvement in the process—it is not hard to see a fairy-tale narrative of the paternal figure, such as a compassionate doctor, healing needy children and adults as he guides them and ensures their successful transformation into mature, healthy citizens. Jain claimed:

> You see, I'm a medical person. As you know, I'm a surgeon. And I have a great faith that communications is a form of energy which can be deployed for development. And by development, I mean improving the quality of life of our countrymen . . . . So my approach is that we should empower them with information, education and communication. So we need a media to inform, educate and communicate our population.[46]

This comment could have also been made by a spokesperson from the Films Division of India in the 1950s. This highly pedagogical, governmental organ resembles Jain's quote in that both reflect a top-down perspective on the citizenry, imagining it as infantile and weakened, thus requiring clear principles and stern guidance. Two key images are repeatedly used in this context: the people as drilled army (see Figure 1) and the concept of *shikshak*, that is the teaching of religious and spiritual knowledge in the personal but highly hierarchized interaction of the disciple (Hindu fraternity) and its guru (Sangh Parivar leaders) (Figure 12) that is practised, for example, in Ramaite devotionalism. Behind this lies an ambiguous rhetoric that attempts to bridge

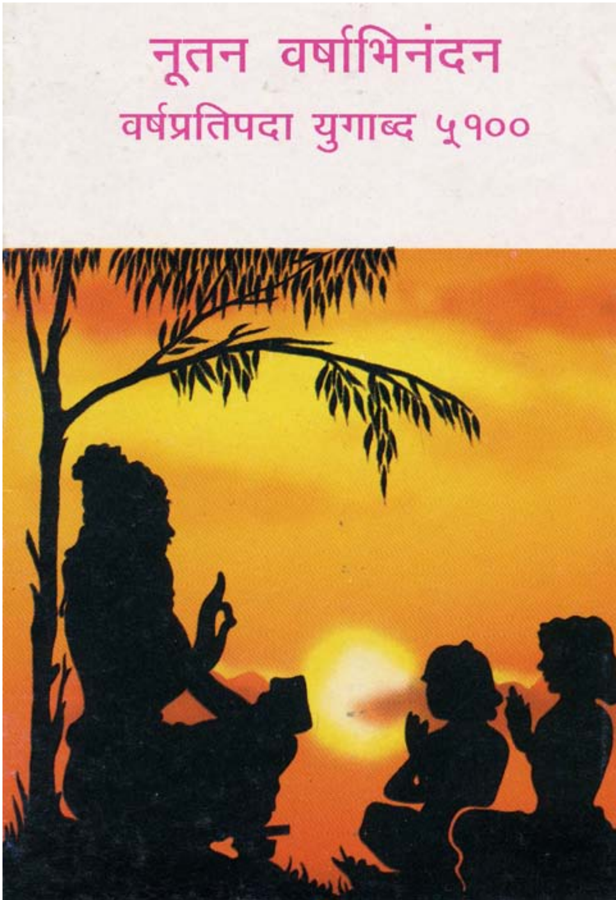


Figure 12 Discipline, knowledge and hierarchy: A spiritual teacher and his pupils. Sangh Parivar New Year Greeting Card, (1990). Private collection.

the gap created by an inherent paradox within Hindutva doctrine. On the one hand it proposes a primordial superiority and fraternity of the Hindu nation, rooted in a glorious, pre-Islamic past. On the other hand, in order to authorize Hindutva as the leader of a revolution, its speakers need to portray 'the people' as inferior and immature, and in need of guidance.

Pedagogic guidance through humanitarian ideals

In order to create figures of identification that could help convey Hindutva ideology's vision of a teleological development from an immature to an awakened people, a selection of figures and ideals from RSS doctrines were adapted and translated into the political sphere. Video technology and its

corresponding narratives came to feature as vehicles for Jain's interpretation of 'higher ideals' into commodified icons. J K Jain states:

> I want to use this potential of video technology for the protection of human rights and for improving the quality of life for my country. I did it, I did it just because it was my conviction. And when you do something to search some higher ideas and goals then you don't have to worry for day-to-day interpretations. Because I draw the inspiration from all the great men from the history . . . I'm not a great man, I'm just trying to follow the footsteps of the great men.[47]

Jain's portrayal of himself as a 'humble' vessel and 'inspired' agent of greater ideals and higher forces is a way of constructing an authority in which his own ideological legitimacy can be enhanced. There is a strong pedagogical undertone in this quote that also finds reflection in the following remark by Jagdish Pal, an RSS activist. Commenting on the aims of videos produced by an organization such as Jain Studios, he suggested that video 'can *mould* the character of a person . . . We are just creating viewpoints, giving information—that is also a noble cause'.[48]

The lineage of 'great men' and 'noble causes' in which J K Jain and Jagdish Pal position themselves is integral to Hindutva ideology's pantheon of national heroes and leaders (Figure 13). Anecdotal stories, comic books, stickers and posters portray the idealized lives of Hindu and Sikh heroes and leaders. They are put on display in Sangh Parivar paraphernalia shops as commodities to be used for the indoctrination of Hindutva supporters and sympathizers and remind us of Jain's familiarity with RSS doctrines. The pantheon of 'ideal men' ranges from great sages and scientists to local warriors kings such as Rana Pratap or Shivaji to national heroes such as Subhas Chandra Bose and Bhagat Singh; an exhibition in which members of the lower castes, and women in particular, rarely figure.[49] With this picture book of heroes, Hindutva ideologues attempt to create an archive of shared history, memories and experiences. By drawing upon this archive, reinterpreting and classifying its holdings, they aim to communicate doctrinal ideas and political interests. Ostensibly, all the figures are inspired by the same vision, that is, the constitution, and the unification and protection of Indian/Hindu society and nationhood. In putting his studios at the service of these same goals, Jain could attribute meaning to video as a technology that served the welfare of the people during their national awakening and self-empowerment.

Visions of ideal governance and civil society

How were Hindutva ideas of fraternity and state related to one another in J K Jain's comments about Jain Studios' task to empower Indians? Having

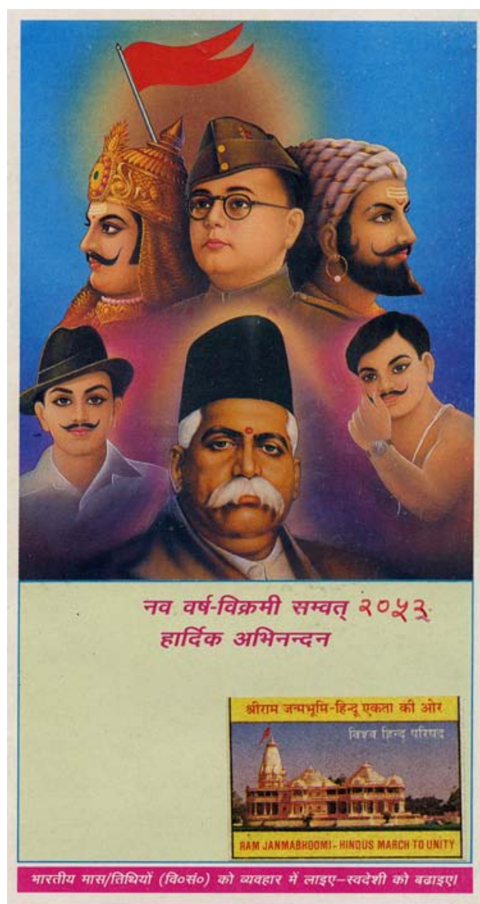


Figure 13 Pantheon of great national heroes and leaders: Rana Pratap, Subhas Bose, Shivaji, Bhagat Singh, Hedgewar, Chandrashekar Azad. Recycled Sangh Parivar New Year Card (c. 1993). Private collection.

translated devotion into doing work for the nation, caste into brotherhood, and *dharma* into a universal device for the production and control of moral conduct, Hindutva spokespeople could then promote the idea that under these conditions, no citizen of India, regardless of caste, religion or the region he or she belonged to, should reject this doctrine as some ideal political or moral 'way of life'. In appropriating *Ram rajya* (Ram's righteous rule/divine kingship) as an ideal-typical model for governance and aligning it with Hindu rashtra and unconditional devotional nationalism (*deshbhakti*, lit. devotion to the country), the Hindu Right unequivocally affirmed its strong fascination with the static idea of a state 'cult'. The RSS in particular, by using pamphlets, iconography and other forms of self-representation, projected its vision of 'an

authoritarian government with a militaristic stance'[50] (see Figure 1). Jain Studios, I shall argue, following Madhava Presad, was used as a tool for an imaginary 'despotic/monarchic organisation of public space'.[51]

In this context, it may help to study the role of political metaphors outside India. In his discussion of the relationship between the nation-state and the brotherhood of citizens evolving from the French Revolution, Münkler held that the demand for state interventions increased despite the notion of a sovereign and responsible fraternity. He argued that the metaphor of voluntary brotherhood was successively substituted by the belief that fraternity could only be guaranteed where a 'father state' acted upon its citizens through surveillance and strict organzsation.[52] Likewise, I propose, BJP ideologues aimed at exploiting *Ram rajya* as a 'think-model' from which to present their ideas on the state's rights and obligations to society.[53] Again, this goes back to Upadhyaya's *Integral Humanism* where despotic divine kingship (*Ram rajya*), people's rule (*jana rajya*) and moral rule (*dharma rajya*) are projected as prototypical forms of a mutual understanding and binding between state rule and Indian people. This 'contract' could then be easily juxtaposed with so-called illegitimate, 'bad rule' (*goonda rajya*).[54] The king's authority is based on his duty to provide the people with a sacred ethical doctrine and a source of social order and political stability as well as the protection of this sacred law from abuse.[55] In return, the citizenry is indebted to the king and state and ask in return to express its respect and absolute loyalty to, if not worship of, the royal state. However, should a king or government ignore its duties, it is society's responsibility to remind them of their essential obligations and prove the sovereign power of *dharma*. We have noted J K Jain's use of metaphors of crisis such as collapse and breakdown against which backdrop those of 'Hindutva's humanity' are unfolded. It follows that particular groups can thus declare a state of emergency, reminding the government of 'sovereign power'.

This idealized reciprocal relationship between people and state, with the added emphasis on *dharma* as essentially independent of and superior to the state, demonstrates a radically different configuration of law and power to that of the European secular state. Yet, it is worth pointing out that there are some parallels. Münkler proposes that the alliance of the metaphors of fraternity and paternal state as moral and political concepts occurred at a time when the spokespeople had to deal with immense changes occurring during the process of modernization. Additionally, these ruptures took place during a period of rapid decline in traditional social loyalties and in 'moral' economic behaviour, yet also saw the rise of a market-oriented economy.[56] From this perspective, it is not surprising to find that in India, the ideas of fraternity and paternal nation-state were shaped in response to colonization and further defined after 1947, even though BJP ideologues define them as ancient indigenous essences.

In his exploration of the genealogy of Indian nationalism, Partha Chatterjee argues that the ideas of a civil society and nation-state emerged from this resistance. They could relate to each other in joint dependency and cooperation, both constituting a counter-space that largely drew its power from the domains of cultural and religious activities and rhetoric. From this context, ideas of a national identity were constructed within the narratives of a moral community, displaying love, kinship, austerity and sacrifice for the national brotherhood of those oppressed and united in their struggle for freedom.[57] With independence, the history of the young nation-state became imprinted with visions of the state's role as deliverer, protector and representative of all citizens alike.[58] Commenting on the emergence of the young paternal state, Khilnani holds that it 'etched itself into the imagination of Indians in a way that no previous political agency had ever done.'[59]

Nevertheless, despite the state's imaginary 'presence', the idea of national passion remained an abstract and distant concern. Matthew S, independent filmmaker and employee of Jain Studios, pinpointed the identification of fraternity with nationhood by questioning the principle of selfless devotion: 'Who has patriotism in this country? No one, or, if so, then the middle class people. The lower classes look for *roti* (bread), they don't have the time for patriotism!'[60]

This quote shows that national identity, for many, is still very much an idea detached from everyday life—despite the suggestive potential and urgency in the metaphor of brotherhood as national devotion. Nationhood can be an almost exotic luxury good to be gazed upon, like a picture on the wall, or a rare specimen in a museum of national heritage. The audiences for commodified icons and narratives of nationhood are primarily the Hindu middle classes, whose mindset for various reasons seemed to respond well to the concept of fraternity-as-commodity. One persuasion strategy was the presentation of Hindutva as an alleged renaissance of a *dharmic* moral economy. To create a desire to join the brotherhood, the idea of selfless devotion had to be linked to the cultural domain of pride in India's heritage, including its pre-Mughal and pre-Colonial history. Likewise, selflessness had to be removed from the domain of economic obligation to the nation-state. Instead, consumer interests were to be protected and access to economic security guaranteed. But the secular government, it is argued, prevented the (Hindu) people from being proud of their heritage. Its demands of high economic sacrifices from 'majority' segments in society collided with the accusation that they granted too much to minority segments. Corruption within politics destabilized governmental credibility even further. Only a civil 'awakening' could interrupt this chain of deterioration.

Information videos and multimedia events

How was 'the message' packaged, imagined and put across? It is important to briefly recap that Hindutva ideology's mediascape consists of overlapping and partly-fusing economic, political and social spheres, all with their own distinct ecology. Besides these, another sphere shall be referred to briefly at this stage of the discussion of Jain Studios' role as a mobilization tool (discussed in more detail in the following chapter); that is, the sphere of artistic production. Jain Studios videos reflect Hindutva politics' usurpation of the domain of popular culture, in particular, religious and national festivals, commercial film, installations of *tableaux vivants* and bazaar posters and comics. The video media became a multimedia event in itself.

Nevertheless, political rhetoric has not only relied on multimedia effects and events in terms of video technology. For example, promoting the practice of pilgrimage was crucial for the creation of political metaphors and mass spectacles. This was explained well by Narendra Modi, at the time of interview an RSS worker and BJP leader who had organized various BJP-led processions (*yatra,* pilgrimage).[61] Commenting on Hindutva processions, he called upon a whole sequence of transformations of religious practice into political practice:

> Of course [the movement] is cultural! In India even Gandhi's movement was just like a cultural movement. Politics were the by-product. What Gandhi was doing: in the evening he was organising a *prarthna* [prayer]. . . . He was talking about the *charka* [the spinning wheel]—what is this? He was talking about the Vaishnavajan Bhajan [lit., prayers for Vaishnava people; prayers for humanity]. . . . Even Lokmanya Tilak—what he was doing? The Ganesh festival![62] One can say that this is a *religious* activity. Another can say it's a *cultural* activity. Someone can say, through this the patriotism comes. In India these are the symbols through which since last hundred years people are working! We are not doing nothing new, this is nothing new for us. This is the tradition of my country. So without cultural activity in India nothing is possible . . . . We love the people with their traditions, so that gives the energy. And vice versa, people are getting the energy from the leaders, leaders are getting the energy from the people. That helps.[63]

This 'concise history of political mobilization' indicates the BJP's intention to present itself as a verbatim 'party of the Indian people', thus placing itself in the lineage of the struggle for independence. Modi's reference to the reciprocal relationship between people and leaders was not only employed to enhance the charismatic appeal of party, but also possibly other Sangh Parivar leaders. It was also used to enable the translation of abstract concepts into Hindutva spokespeople's rhetoric on nationality as a 'second skin'.

Modi's statement creates an imaginary cartography, or the idea of a larger performative space, in which political metaphors come to be enacted as nodal points that, once connected to each other, help spokespeople navigate the idea of unity through a sea of rhetorical possibilities. Modi's idealized model of a mutual and energy-loaded alliance between people and leaders was based on an interpretation of *bhakti* devotion (Chapter 3). With this, the notion of selfless love of the religious devotee to his or her deity combined with the deity's compassionate acknowledgement and response of blessing the devout believer could be transferred onto the higher level of national identity. The idea that the citizen-state nexus should be rooted in mutual understanding and sharing of one culture and of one history indicates how Hindutva spokespeople envisaged themselves as being both the legitimate '(Hindu) people's voice' and as deified objects of selfless devotion.

Jain strove to place his studios' agenda as catering to both the ideological environment of RSS and VHP doctrines and to the BJP pragmatism, which was to a great extent credited with the successful election campaigning. For most RSS and VHP leaders, the capturing of parliamentary power was viewed as only one aspect of the Sangh Parivar's widespread and ongoing radical agitation and transformation of the country. Thus, Jain came up with a classification of two kinds of videos produced for mobilization:

> One are the information videos. Whatever information videos we made, these were objectively made by my journalists giving the different viewpoints of the same problems. But then there are propaganda videos where a political party or a leader could use video technology for propagating their views or ideology.[64]

Broadly, the 'information videos' referred to here are what this study refers to as 'issue-based' videos. These were semi-documentaries or docu-dramas related to and made for the Ramjanmabhoomi agitation, the cow protection movement[65] or the Kashmir issue.[66] The Ayodhya videos in particular were largely approved by a group of RSS, VHP and VHP ideologues before they were released to the public between 1989–93. Very often, so-called 'experts' consulted Jain Studios' employees in the early stages of production to add emphasis and information to the scripts of these 'information' videos. 'Propaganda videos', on the other hand, were produced for BJP election campaigns and other party candidates.

Ingredients of 'information videos'

In order to familiarize the reader with some of the visual and audio rhetoric of the so-called 'information videos' or issue-based videos, a brief explanation

will be given here. Many videos produced by Jain Studios are characterized by an intense use of recycled footage, be it posters, comic-like drawings, feature films or newsreel footage taken from other films. With the strategy of 'recycling' material that had already circulated in the public sphere, production costs could be kept at a minimum. Some scenes were meant to illustrate 'historical' incidents such as battles between Mughal horsemen and Hindu soldiers (see Figures 31–35, Chapter 3). Rather than having to stage such scenes themselves, which would have required a much larger budget and more time, as well as actors, requisites and appropriate outdoor locations or studio facilities, Jain Studios' cameramen and producers used publicly-available film segments and aimed at credibility by means of montage. The use of voice-over commentaries, special sound effects and music was meant to ensure that this patchwork approach would convey both 'thrill' and 'information' (Figure 14). Similar to the situation that Narendra Modi's above comment was referring to, which involved the appropriation of a range of popular symbols and practices into the political domain, the BJP hoped that by using familiar iconography and aesthetics in its videos, it could encourage positive associations with the party. Multimedia montages were essential parts of Ramjanmabhoomi videos, and through them, the Hindutva version of 'Indian history' could be re-told. These montages are also integral to Jain's 'information videos' as they were meant to enhance the feeling in the viewers that secular schoolbooks and teachings had 'incorrectly' depicted Hindu history.



Figure 14 Animated poster of Indian classical dancer superimposed on the Congress-I election symbol. Still from Rajiv Gandhi Tamil Nadu election video 1989.

Jain Studios did provide current footage for docu-drama scenes, that is, staged scenes with documentary appeal (the meeting of a warrior queen and a saint; or child Ram's miraculous epiphany in the Babri mosque, see Chapter 3). These scenes include documentary footage from religio-political events, speeches and interviews and special effects and animation. The voice-over commentary was added by Ramesh K, an employee of Jain Studios who had previously earned a living by lending his voice to devotional recordings on audio-cassette. Quite often, his recorded voice would be estranged by an echo-effect so that it resembled the voice-over commentary of the popular television serial *Ramayan* (Chapter 3).[67] 'Information' videos also carry devotional songs taken from audio-cassettes that were for sale in Sangh Parivar shops, or distributed through other organizations, such as Ayodhya.[68] These inflammatory patriotic songs had been made explicitly for the Ramjanmabhoomi agitation. On occasion, these videos were accompanied by hymns celebrating the BJP leaders and the party's manifesto. Special election tunes were produced particularly for what Jain called the 'propaganda' videos of parties and candidates. Many such tunes are based on the melodic formula of popular film songs.[69]

Infotainment

Jain Studios' reliance on the power of 'information' did not seem sufficient. Both 'information' and 'propaganda' videos, especially when shown outside Sangh Parivar networks, demanded the packaging that came with entertainment capsules. Thus, they were generally presented with an ensemble of staged media, such as film soundtracks, folk dances or the screening of an episode from *Ramayan* or some other blockbuster. This promised to have a crowd-pulling effect for rural areas in particular, but also for urban regions. VOW director, Ankur Jain, confirmed the event-based approach when he talked about the screening of videos in villages or towns: 'When we go in there and do our thing we are like an *event*. There's fun and fair, and there's music, and there's video and there's a large screen'.[70]

J K Jain employed the term 'infotainment' to illustrate mobilization strategies through the video media. The entertainment was to attract the audience so the videos could deliver the 'real' message. He explained: 'Why should a large audience be there? So whatever the entertaining stuff, we will show it. But while entertaining, we also try to pass on such information which can help them developing themselves'.[71] Video scripts, too, reveal strong pedagogical, if not authoritarian undertones. On the one hand, this approach confirms the top-down attitude both of the media agents and Hindutva spokespeople who imagined the audiences as essentially immature and infantile, and in need of 'education', or rather, indoctrination by means of firm guidance and leadership.

On the other hand, it also confirms the hypothesis that the 'sender' engaged in authoritarian persuasion because it was not sure that attention would otherwise be paid to the videos.

The noble task—to be performed by Jain Studios—was to bring transparency into public opinion-making by lifting the veil of misinformation. By constantly and systematically blurring the borders between 'realism' and 'fiction', Jain tried to distance himself and Jain Studios from accusations that neither the video production nor their distribution was ever expected to leave the profit-oriented domain of electioneering and thus emotive mobilization. Instead, he sketched the studios' activities in the light of a 'national or humanitarian objective'. Yet, reading between the lines, the attempt to define 'information' as part of an 'objective' cause reveals a thoroughly constructed and biased communalist agenda. Whatever 'neutral information' or documentary evidence Jain's cameramen might have captured, the editing process would invariably alter the clips by sandwiching them between highly emotive images and narratives. The overtly aggressive rhetoric against Muslims in many video segments was part of a mobilizing strategy through which viewers were persuaded to perceive themselves as soldiers in a sacred army that was obliged to defend the ideals and values of a kingdom threatened by internal and external forces. Footage of members of the VHP's militant youth wing, the Bajrang Dal, appears in Jain Studios' Ayodhya videos repeatedly, displaying them as confident and well-equipped soldiers of Hindutva (Figure 15). Clearly, the videos were by no means neutral, newsreel-like parcels of 'information', as Jain



Figure 15 Hanuman's Army on the move: Bajrang Dal on scooters at the *Ram Rath Yatra*. Still from *From the Sea . . .*

suggests. Rather, they created narratives based on the metaphors of eternal crisis and fear through which 'the Hindu people' could be positioned on one side, and the secular government and its allegedly 'pampered' or 'appeased' minorities, the Muslims, on the other.

Inclusion and exclusion through metaphors of the other

We have read J K Jain's reference to the suppression of 'peacefully' worshipping *swayam sevaks* in Ayodhya in 1990, thus allocating the experience of suffering to Hindu people. Yet, according to Hindutva rhetoric, the success of nationhood as fraternity was not only endangered by 'pseudo-secularist' politics. Within this type of utopian society there exist those who seemingly do not want to subscribe to the contractual moral relationship. Within this representational practice, these segments can be presented as a threat. In the context of the Ayodhya controversy, a strategy of inclusion and exclusion evolved based on the assumption that only those who subscribe to the ideas of *dharma* and *Ram rajya* may enjoy the rights of citizenship.

A lot of wishful thinking lies in the BJP slogan 'one culture, one people, one nation'. It is charged with the idea that India, as a 'beehive of diversity', can be tamed into one neat formation of 'mature' citizens of Hindutva. But there is also the implication of forced brotherhood that dwells in the promise of *Ram rajya*, at once revealing itself to those who are willing to assimilate and at the same time baring its teeth to those who are not. The latter becomes evident in a reinterpretation of the *vedas* for everyday conduct, by Talreja, an RSS supporter. Talreja argues that those who do not follow *dharma* and the Hindu way of life, 'are not to be treated as brothers. They are dealt with as encroachers, assaulters and enemies'.[72]

If there was talk about a majority forming the *volonté générale*, as in the case of J K Jain's statement that 'we are all Indians', there was bound to be a dispute about minorities, who have particular interests and desires too. Hindutva ideologues attempted to shape consensus according to their own terms, thereby refusing to join the contract that had so far dominated, to use Partha Chatterjee's words, the 'discursive space where the technologies of governmentality operate'.[73] In arguing that within secularism's principle of respect for people, a moral argument is made for toleration, he specified that the limits of toleration are outlined in the process of contesting cultural rights.[74]

In the case of Hindutva politics in the 1980s and 1990s, acts such as the recognition and tolerance of sameness and differences took place under the condition of whether a person or group was willing to assimilate Hindutva as a common denominator for cultural identity, and thus citizenship, or not. The Hindutva spokespeople's concern with threatening 'Others' became the main tool for legitimizing an aggressive 'Self' that could, ironically, be presented as

essentially tolerant and peaceful solely defending itself. The construct of the tolerant Hindu was reflected in J K Jain's above description of innocent *kar sevaks* simply reclaiming their constitutional right to religious practice in Ayodhya.

Just as in the popular interpretation of the bourgeoisie during the French Revolution, whose selfish interests were said to range higher than their commitment to fraternity, the Muslims were stigmatized as voluntarily excluding themselves from Hindutva brotherhood by claiming particular rights and privileges without being prepared to take up particular duties and identifications. Such a strategy followed the assumption of Hindutva ideologues and politicians that the more talk there was about a human aggressor threatening the potential fraternal harmony, someone who claimed access to the treasure-house but simultaneously refused to contribute to it, the more efficient the appeals to unite against him would be. Likewise, the more destructive the energy is that is attributed to a group or source positioned outside the moral community and its shared values and ideas, the more legitimate its members feel when leaders call for a united and more aggressive stance (Chapters 4–6). 'Tolerance' is called upon only within a specific field marked by the consensus of a moral community. Those agents moving outside the frame, and challenging the common good by disregarding the consensus, can be safely treated as 'unequal' and intolerant. Thus, the more Hindutva ideologues and politicians could market the Hindu way of life as essentially civilized, tolerant and selfless, the more they could call upon the outsiders as intolerant and selfish 'barbarians', allegedly complaining, as K R Malkani put it in an English newspaper article, 'of educational and economic backwardness, as if the Hindu is responsible for that. And on top of this, their top leaders make offensive statements from time to time. The Hindu notes all this and he is not amused. His nerves get on edge'.[75] In this light, aggression could be interpreted as legitimate self-protection.

The second kind of aggression is related to the process of depicting members of the Muslim minority, if not Islam as a whole, as intolerant, violent people versus the 'truly' secular Hindu people. To quote Rohit M, an RSS activist, filmmaker and political observer from the Deendayal Research Institute:

> Secularism is the core of Hindutva. The mere concept of letting others exist—this is the core of Hindutva . . . Secularism . . . means . . . that despite any religious or belief, even if you are an atheist, despite of that you are treated equal. That is secularism . . . The basic concept of Islam, that anybody who believes in Islam is a Muslim, anybody who doesn't believe in Islam is a Kaffir, is the basic theory and essence of Islam—and any Kaffir should be chopped. That's it. And if you are converting a Kaffir into a Mussulman you are going to be in heaven. This basic essence

> that you don't want anybody on earth to exist who doesn't live in Islam. This is where we will have problems.[76]

This quote moves on a level that unconsciously draws parallels to Samuel Huntington's work entitled *The Clash of Civilisations* (1996), and suggests that an essential truth—and thus sovereignty—is entwined with Hindutva ideology. Likewise, 'positive' secularism, identified with tolerance, can be monopolized as an exclusive pillar of Hindutva. While the Hindu people are declared as essentially tolerant and civilized, the 'basic essence' of Muslims seems to be their alleged obsession to convert people and their threatening of those who refuse conversion, as well as this unwillingness to 'integrate', thus providing communal disharmony.

Forced brotherhood under firm leadership

Despite talk of 'Hindu superiority and awakening' Hindutva spokespeople had to make sure that the audiences could be controlled and kept under surveillance. This is where the idea of 'forced brotherhood' moved in. Hindutva leaders suggested that the brotherhood would be destabilized and turned into a pack of wolves attacking each other as soon as hierarchy and firm leadership were removed. Thus arrived the emphasis on education (camouflaged as awakening) and state intervention. Indian democracy, some Hindutva spokespeople argued, would even profit from the constitution of a 'temporary' military dictatorship to get the house in order.[77] Rohit M said:

> I feel that for this kind of moment, to make people understand what their identity, their cultural identity, is, people must be literate enough. And to make that kind of literacy available, you have to have a dictatorship for ten to fifteen years . . . I feel that India needs a government for at least five years that could represent the total majority.[78]

The idea that the Indian people were 'not yet ripe for democracy' and would thus welcome dictatorship for their own sake had also been articulated by pre-independence political leaders like Subhas Chandra Bose. Several Sangh Parivar New Year's cards of the early 1990s carried Bose's portrait, displaying him in a contemplative, almost removed position as he watches armies of saluting and uniformed RSS-workers march by, in row after row.[79] An RSS calendar from the early 1990s carries the map of India covered completely in straight patterns of uniformed RSS-men, with the Hindu flag emerging from this disciplined body (see Figure 1). The suggestion that the authoritarian state would be 'automatically' substituted by a democratic state as soon as civil society was 'literate' and thus mature enough, required an authority that could tell when this point had come. But it seems that the inventiveness of Hindutva

spokespeople, in particular the RSS, in terms of legitimizing a rhetoric of strong leadership and weak citizenry, created a perpetual cycle in which they highlighted one crisis after another, be it related to external conflicts (e.g., Pakistan, globalization) or internal matters (e.g., minority appeasement).

Hindutva ideology's popularized rhetoric of civil society invokes a picture of a fortress: the courts inside are filled with light, laughter and fair-play; outside its walls lie the battlefields and graveyards of the 'dark side' of civil society, populated with those citizens who do not want to join the festivities. Whether aggression is legitimate or illegitimate depends on the point of view taken in this cartography. Even the festive courts of Hindutva have their shady corners where fights for the best and largest pieces of cake are fought. The question of tolerance and recognition is as much a question of control over and access to resources.

'If your target is victory . . .': ambiguous relationships towards video media

Metaphors of unity and crisis were not sufficient to make a political media like video technology 'work'. The ways in which Jain Studios' videos were exploited created controversies among members of the Sangh Parivar. On the one hand, ethnographic fieldwork found that there were differences of opinion over whether the videos were exploited for a religio-cultural or a political purpose. On the other hand, there were indications that the video media was no substitute for other political means of 'mass contact' and mobilization. These two issues shall be discussed in this final section of this chapter.

Contesting revolution and political power

Jain Studios' issue-based videos were controversially discussed not only by critics outside the sphere of Hindutva, such as in the 1990–1 session of the *Rajya Sabha* (Upper House) when BJP-opponents accused the Studios of having produced and circulated videos in order to stir up communal violence (see Chapter 5), but also within the Sangh Parivar. Opinions diverged over the question of what role politics and parliamentary strategies were imagined to play in the nation-building process. Differences over Jain Studios' public stance would occasionally manifest between the more orthodox and pragmatic Hindutva spokespeople. While the first group felt that the Studios represented a dilution of Hindutva ideology through its commodification as an electoral tool, the latter argued that the Sangh Parivar, and thus Hindutva too, profited from the BJP's ability to carry Hindutva's ideals and interests to a wider public sphere, bringing them closer to political transformation and thus a realization of their goals. Ideologically more orthodox spokespeople close to the RSS and

VHP felt that loyalties to Hindutva doctrines had to be proved. One key problem with this was that, to a great extent, the ideological doctrines promoted by the RSS and the VHP relied on ideas of revolutionary battle and organizational structures of governance that were not necessarily compatible with parliamentary structures. Meanwhile, many BJP spokespeople favoured a view that fused revolutionary transformation with parliamentary structures, or even set itself aside from Hindutva doctrines.

Quite a few orthodox Sangh Parivar agents disagreed with the BJP for exploiting the video media and the Ayodhya agitation for electoral purposes. This view found reflection in filmmaker and RSS activist Rohit M's argument about a Jain Studios' video made on a mass agitation event, the Ram Shila Puja, in Ayodhya 1989:

> It was used politically, you see. It was shown only during the elections. The rest of the time it wasn't shown out there. This is what I feel bad about. If you are going on a cultural platform you make the movie and you show it all the time. You show it even when the elections are not on. You are making a public opinion out of it, you are gathering momentum from the public! Why show it only during the elections and once the elections are over your videos on wheels [vans] are back into the stable?! [80]

Rohit M even went as far as to argue that the politicization of the Ayodhya agitation, from the time the BJP decided to support the VHP onwards, weakened the 'movement'. The following comment by Rohit M highlights the fact that the term 'movement' does not imply homogeneity of those involved or a shared view on the use of video media for the purpose of mobilization. Rather, it demonstrates the controversial forces that assembled, and to a large extent proposed unity, under the umbrella of the Ramjanmabhoomi agitation:

> The mistake was that the moment it was politicised, the Ayodhya movement lost its power. The BJP is responsible. They abused it. That's why Jain Studios' cassettes are useless: they were made more for a political use than for a cultural use. The videos are very good. But they have been made for politics, for electoral gains . . . Watching them was really poisoning, fulfilling, there was a good feeling about and with them . . . But: it was political.[81]

The key question arising here concerns the extent to which Hindutva ideological doctrine should and could have been commodified into political rhetoric. RSS and VHP spokespeople often articulated their discontent over the fact that the BJP had only used the Ramjanmabhoomi controversy to stage itself and employ powerful metaphors and narratives to leverage themselves into public consciousness, while grassroots organizations had to do their own footwork. Also, with the RSS being a predominantly enclosed cadre

organization, the BJP threatened to destabilize this rather well-balanced hierarchical system by consciously appealing to new voter groups, such as the Dalit, promising the kind of equality at the political and economic levels that had previously been 'reserved' for the Hindu élite.

Different voices, different communication media

This chapter started with a voice-over commentary's positive projection of video's capacity to enhance political mobilization and transformation. It aimed at providing insights into the ways in which videos were expected to work as a 'mouthpiece' of the Sangh Parivar by translating the aims and ideals of Hindutva doctrine and politics for the purpose of mobilizing support for Hindutva as a 'people's movement' (see Figure 9). In that respect, Jain Studios contributed to the creation of an imaginary landscape of a Hindutva nation-state and civil society. The employment of video technology symbolized Hindutva spokespeople's expectations of the media's potential to set free fears and desires related to the idea of self-empowerment. Video became part of the Hindutva's self-representation as a spectacle based on the metaphor of a great moral fraternity. While this metaphor could be used to suggest liberation, respect and tolerance, it could simultaneously be inscribed with techniques of control and surveillance upon those 'needing' to be mobilized by imagining them as immature and passive, and in need of stern guidance.

Jain Studios, from its earliest days, was envisaged to work as a link to communicate Hindutva ideas on the relationship between state and society to the imagined audiences. As mentioned above, some agents from within enclosed organizations, such as the RSS, criticized the BJP's attitude toward using video technology predominantly for election purposes. Opinions of spokespeople further divided when it came to the question of whether the use of video technologies could be fully trusted. This, however, reflected the deeper insecurities of Hindutva ideologues and pragmatists about the ways of reading employed and elaborated by their imagined audiences, despite the authoritative voice-over commentaries accompanying the moving images.

In terms of distributing political messages, Jain Studios' videos have to be understood as integral to a whole ensemble of media strategies that were employed to temporarily attract the audience's attention and enhance feelings of identification. Especially in the late 1980s and early 1990s, video's advantage over other means of communication was that it was new and mobile, and offered a means to stage ideas and interests as 'infotaining' spectacles. With this in mind, as the following chapters will show, video technology unveiled some of the unique potential of representation by means of audiovisual media. Yet, some spokespeople saw deficiencies in this media, in comparison to other

means of mobilization. Relative to processions (*yatra*), for example, video did not deliver the same quality of communication that this face-to-face contact enabled in their live events. In comparing video to *yatra*, Narendra Modi expresses his hesitation about the effects of videos, even though in the same interview he refers to himself as a member of the young 'mediagenic' BJP:

> Through *yatra* you can have mass contact! . . . Of course, it was there in my country since the last thousand years . . . But even today we are feeling that *direct communication*, direct mass communication, heart-to-heart talking, this is the best way . . . The interest in the video, it is there . . . But the impact of the actual programme and the impact of this instrument is very, very marginal. This *yatra* can transform you *totally*. The [video] cassette can satisfy you when you see the cassette. But it cannot transform you.[82]

This quote indicates that video technology, with regard to content and distribution, was viewed by some as an accompaniment rather than a primary means of mobilization. Those people thought the traditional means of communication seemed to be a safer tool for mobilization. Insecurity about the trustworthiness of video is also evident in the following statement by the then party president, L K Advani (LKA), whom J K Jain referred to as 'the hero of communication'. This perception was based on the fact that Advani adapted a range of translations of religious practices into the domains of both political-event management and self-management. While Advani supported the yatra, because of its religious appeal and charisma-enhancing potential, he displayed reservations when commenting on the effects of video technology:

> LKA: We have not really evaluated how effective this medium has been . . . At least until today the principal mode of public communication *is* public meetings. Till yet. Over a period of time it's very likely that *this* [electronic media] becomes the most important medium, whether it's television or it's video. *Not yet*, though. These Jain Studio *raths* [chariots, VOW-vans] have been going around. In some campaigns we've engaged them quite widely. But as I said, we have not really evaluated how effective have been their contribution in spreading our message.
>
> CB: But isn't video a medium through which you can reach the largest amount of people if you don't go there personally?
>
> LKA: We do not know, as I said, we do not know how many of the people do watch it. Theoretically, we may be knowing there is such and such a place. There are so many television sets and so many cable operators who serve them. But so far as the public medium is concerned, we are aware of it, we can *see* it, that these massive public meetings, at this place

> 10,000 were there, at that place 50,000 were there . . . 50,000 assembling at a particular place for a BJP meeting—that message itself is transmitted and conveys an impression of strength which perhaps the television and the video do not.[83]

In a live spectacle, a leader and his team can take control and react in '*statu procedenti*' with the prevailing atmosphere, thus adding the necessary twists and turns in order to regulate its development. A video, however, creates a space of its own, allowing for no other forms of individual or collective participation or interference. Similar to Modi's above comparison of the media, Advani's statement might reflect the inherent fear that audience members, once left alone to watch a video, could easily switch it off or simply turn away and leave the viewing site. However, Advani's assumption that appropriating processions for political mobilization results in guaranteed success was an incorrect one. On several occasions, the *yatra* backfired, because like video, *yatra* is an ambiguous communication medium, the BJP failed at least twice to successfully stage itself through it.[84]

Concluding notes

J K Jain and other Sangh Parivar spokespeople depicted the video media as part of a 'cheerful revolution' aimed at forming a moral Hindu brotherhood or organism within an authoritarian but paternal state. The use of, and associations with, video revealed Hindutva spokespeople's elitist and top-down attitude towards a seemingly infantile citizenry. The metaphor of brotherhood also led to the emotive re-creation of communal stereotypes and dichotomies, particularly in its presentation of the Muslim minority as an identity-threatening force, thus making them legitimate targets of Hindutva aggression. The last section addressed the concern of Sangh Parivar spokespeople with the BJPs exploitation of Jain Studios' videos for electoral purposes only. Here, a gap between orthodox ideologues and political pragmatists opened in terms of interests and agendas, particularly as regards Hindutva's commodification and 'membership'. Diverging opinions within the BJP with respect to the guaranteed effects of political communication were also discussed. It became evident that other media, such as public processions enjoy great sympathies among spokespeople in terms of 'direct' contact and control of audiences/voters. Yet, video media, through manipulation of material by means of editing, could enhance an event's appeal and success. Consequently, no general remarks could be made about the power of the media technology, a matter of concern for those engaged in political marketing.

In examining Jain Studios, this chapter proposed that the use of video technology reflected Hindutva spokespeople's attempts to create the idea of the

state as a paternal and disciplining guide, whereas civil society could be imagined as an infantile and passionate brotherhood. Furthermore, the video medium was meant to enhance notions of an alleged crisis of nationality and governance to which it simultaneously proposed a static model of Hindutva as moral and political solution, all subsumed under the notion of utmost urgency for change.

It is at the level of technique and aesthetics that video unravelled a unique way of presenting Hindutva doctrine and political messages. This approach will be explored in the next chapter where the 'commodification of Hindutva ideology' will be addressed.

3

HINDUTVA'S MEDIA PHANTASMAGORIAS

The introductory scene of the video *God Manifests Himself* (hereafter, also referred to as *GMH*)[1] , produced in early 1990 by Jain Studios, opens with a speech by J K Jain, who appears on screen against the backdrop of a white temple and blue skies. The temple is a model of the proposed Ram temple due to be 'rebuilt' at the disputed site of the Babri mosque in Ayodhya in order, according to spokespeople of the Hindu Right, to honour Lord Ram's birth and reinstall national integrity and justice to the Hindu majority. The site is particularly well known to us because of the mosque's demolition by supporters of the Hindutva movement on December 6, 1992, and because of the riots between Hindus and Muslims that swept across the subcontinent in the subsequent months. In the video, J K Jain addresses the viewers like this:

> In the work of God, in the work of building the nation and reconstructing the social fabric, Jain Studios and all our workers keep doing this work—may your co-operation and blessings be with us. This is our prayer to Lord Ram. Jai Shri Ram (Victory to Lord Ram)!

There then follows a montage of different calendar prints of Lord Ram, one of the main gods of the Hindu pantheon, referred to as the beholder of supreme authority. Different close-up stills of his face now appear in front of our eyes, dissolving into one another, the flow being interrupted only by animated footage of the proposed temple model, the sun or the universe (Figures 16 and 17). This montage is accompanied by the chanting of Sanskrit verses like, 'Ram is the eternal Lord, Ram is the greatest worship, truth and sacrifice'. The centrality of the Ram posters in the montage indexes Hindutva ideology's visual stylization of the god-king into the ideal national man (*rashtra purush*), an idol to be worshipped by all Indian nationals alike, regardless of their personal religious beliefs. L K Advani in the *BJP's White Paper on Ayodhya* declares: 'Sri Rama is the unique symbol, the unequalled symbol of our oneness, of our integration, as well as our aspiration to live the higher values. [He symbolizes] . . . the ideal conduct, just as Rama Rajya has always represented the ideal of governance'.[2]



Figure 16 Ram poster, superimposed on animated shot of cosmos. Still from *GMH*.



Figure 17 Ram poster, superimposed on animated shot of cosmos and Hindu temple. Still from *GMH*.

The montage reveals that the ideologues of Hindutva nationalism have claimed the power of representation for the alleged majority of Indians, the Hindus, by defining as essentially Indian what they characterize not only as the 'Hindu way of life', but also as the sole 'true' conduct. J K Jain's quote shows that one strategy of translating this 'way of life' was to produce audiovisual narratives that could create or enhance *deshbhakti* (devotion to the country)

in the viewers as potential supporters. His festive appeal constructs the viewers as sanctified workers united in their revolutionary work for the 'welfare of the nation'.

Representation and intervisuality

Let us recap. The previous chapter discussed how the BJP exploited the video media and emotive issues such as the Ayodhya controversy to open an imaginary 'think-space', as well as an actual space for political performance and physical agitation. As this domain was consciously loaded with various metaphors, the public debate on nationality could be crystallized and agitated with emotions, both anxieties and desires, connected to ideas of righteous and poor governance, the Hindu people as a fraternity and its participation outside or within models of governance. Sharing those metaphors, the dispute on the purported illegitimacy of the Babri mosque enabled a whole range of socio- and politico-religious organisations aligned to the Sangh Parivar to temporarily unite and attack the authority of the secular government in power as well as Muslim groups. The aim, according to the BJP's *White Paper on Ayodhya*, was to counter the 'erosion of our national identity and national consciousness . . . as corrective to this denationalised politics'.[3]

How could the so-called 'erosion' of an identity be depicted? This chapter analyses the ways in which new visual technologies may organize and challenge patterns of seeing for the purpose of political mobilization and ideological indoctrination. It shall be argued that *GMH* enables us to pose crucial questions about the relationship between visual and political representation. Both forms of representation are part of signifying practices that create meaning and what Michel Foucault called 'regimes of truth'.[4] Foucault conceived 'truth' as the outcome of an effective creation and display of knowledge within a discourse of power, both enabling empowerment and demanding constraint. Thus what is presented as 'true' and 'real' is derived from power relations and interests contested by various social agents and institutions. Once again, consensus is required for the authorization of 'truth', similarly to the discussion of 'tolerance' in the previous chapter. And this consensus is very often negotiated and displayed in public, as part of a representation process. Consequently, representation needs to be located on two different levels, the political and the aesthetic, each enforcing the other. Political representation is the act of 'speaking for' a community that feels 'represented by' and 'identifies with' the spokesperson. Even though the reference might be to an already existing community, it is in such dynamic processes of political representation that 'new' communities are temporarily constituted and recruited into being; in our case, the Hindu fraternity. Such an act of representation includes the

elaboration of strategies of inclusion (participation via citizenship) and exclusion (denial of rights). The (audio-)visual representation, broadly speaking, is linked to iconography, pedagogical narrative and performance, that is, staging. Well before the rise of Hindutva nationalism in postcolonial India, images and media technologies enabled political agents to negotiate and create ideas of community, thus becoming instruments of political representation in processes of nation-building.[5]

One of the key problems of representation inherent in the community constituting processes is their rootedness in heterogeneity. This has been highlighted by Ulf Hannerz in his argument that, 'a great many state apparatuses today, as they promote messages of nationhood, are themselves creolizing local cultures; they produce new cultures by inserting selected indigenous meanings and symbols into an imported matrix, to which they must in some ways be adapted. Yet this is a creolization which the state can hardly itself celebrate, but must rather define away, in its pursuit of cultural integrity and authenticity'.[6] Crossover and ambiguity underlying the process of nationality-constitution thus address a deeper ambiguity inscribed in representational practices on both the aesthetic and the political level. The problem with the first level is that any politico-ideological 'message' is based on the complex field of multiple meanings, readings and practices of visuality mentioned earlier. That with the second level relates to the heterogeneity within the Sangh Parivar itself. During the Ayodhya controversy, the different social agents that assembled with their varying ideas and interests under the banner of what the Sangh Parivar commonly defined as 'movement' or agitation (the Hindi word used is *andolan*), diverged and collided at the level of interpretation of ideological discourse and political practice. Furthermore, they were subject to the dynamic flows of context-based negotiations and changes taking place within and outside their organizational structures. Despite the claim that the Ayodhya campaign was a 'people's movement', *GMH* shows the elitist attitude of Hindutva speakers when they homogenize their varied audiences, ranging from members of the urban lower middle classes and upper castes to those of Dalit and *adivasi* groups, into a governable and tamed army of followers. In this regard, the video further enables a discussion on the attempt to 'tame' and gain control over the images and narratives that had been recruited from a wide range within cultural practice in India in order to control human agency.

An analysis of the rhetoric of video technology demonstrates the relevance of two aesthetic practices in particular. First, Hindutva politics of representation are based on the technique of 'interocularity'[7] or 'intervisuality',[8] that is, the complex interplay of audiovisual spaces wherein images journey from one socio-political context to another, thus being incorporated into new frames and ways of seeing, varying according to medium

and transforming across time and place. Video technology and technique can be understood as a 'mimetic faculty',[9] that is, part of a central process of representation, the competence of an agent to create authority and selfhood by means of imitation and alteration.

Second, within the practice of representation in Hindutva discourse, particular 'wish-images', a term coined by Walter Benjamin, were generated. As a specific aesthetic domain, video technology facilitated the wish-images' ability to unfold their unique 'magical realist' appeal. I read Benjamin's idea of 'wish-images' as a specific form of 'agency' of images enhanced by Hindutva ideologues in order to control and position the viewer by presenting national identity as a phantasmagoria, that is, a bright exhibition of glittering objects imbued with symbolic meaning, displayed as objects of national desire.[10] Benjamin's 'wish-image', explored in more detail below, is a spectacle-based object of metamorphosis, to be imbued by the viewer with marvel and desire, as well as fear. The object gains meaning for the present by being placed between a nostalgic past and a utopian future, suggesting the transformation of a dream into a reality.

Furthermore, in responding to the drastic economic and political transformations discussed in the first chapter, intervisuality and 'wish-images' profited from and impacted upon the new public consciousness that emerged with the audiovisual mediascape in the 1980s. They thus sanctioned the development of new kinds of 'public speech'[11] and 'nationalist realism', that is, as Carol Breckenridge and Arjun Appadurai put it, the 'array of images, symbols, scripts and plots in which the nation is figured as central to the project of modernity'.[12] The combination of the concepts of 'wish-image' and 'nationalist realism' helps to plug into a deeper exploration of Hindutva rhetoric and performance.

On *God Manifests Himself*

Comprising two parts, *GMH* offers a historical chronology of the Ramjanmabhoomi (Rama's birthplace) campaign (Part 1) and footage documenting the *Ram Shila Puja* (worship of Ram's sacred bricks) in Ayodhya in October and November 1989 (Part 2). The *Puja* was the cathartic completion of a campaign during which thousands of bricks were collected from Hindu communities all over India and abroad, consecrated by priests aligned to the VHP, and assembled in Ayodhya for the purpose of (re)building Ram's temple. Visually, the bricks stand for the alleged '*vox populi*'.[13] Part 1 recounts the 'illegitimate occupation' and 'desecration' of the sacred site in Ayodhya by the Babri mosque and speaks of the centuries of humiliation of the Hindu people. It goes on to argue the need to protect and restore the lost glory of *Hindu Rashtra* (nation of Hindus), partly by means of diplomacy but

primarily through battle. The voice-over cajoles the Hindu people, the 'dormant national mind',[14] to 'awaken' and continue the task of 'liberating' not just Ram, but also the recent past and the present in which the citizenry allegedly lives in a state of emergency. This crisis, it is suggested, can only be resolved through national devotion (*deshbhakti*).

GMH circulated widely among RSS grassroots networks and other organizations of the Sangh Parivar where it was shown at private and semi-private video shows in local neighbourhoods or sold in local paraphernalia shops and offices. The number of 'travelling' copies was unknown even to Dr J K Jain. During the Ayodhya campaign, several more Jain Studios videos were produced for mobilization purposes, most of them carrying key scenes from *GMH*.[15] To supervise, research and control the development of the script for *GMH*, about three consultants were delegated from the head offices of the VHP and RSS in Delhi. Before its 'public release', at a meeting of about two thousand RSS-workers at the organization's headquarters in Nagpur (Central India), Dr J K Jain presented the demo tape to a selected group of BJP, VHP and RSS leaders for approval. The video has since become a prototype of audiovisual Hindutva rhetoric.

Going popular: routes and journeys to Hindutva's pantheon

> You see, when you have a pen, you have the power to reconstruct the language. In audiovisual media, you have a selected use of such visuals which depict that event or idea.[16]

Analysis of the lineage of some of the key visuals of national devotion presented in *God Manifests Himself* reveals that images, like people, have a biography and develop in specific socio-cultural contexts and audiovisual milieux that overlap and inform each other in a constant flux. For example, the religious and philosophical origins of an icon like Ram oscillate through various visual and symbolic spaces, thereby changing their meaning over time, depending on the context.[17] This vibrant domain of intervisuality helped Hindutva ideologues in the difficult task of generating a distinctive nationalist fervour. This is how Ramnath Ojha, a senior VHP activist who helped script *GMH* as a consultant, put it: 'To make a nationalist is difficult. But it's easy to make a man religious. Because *it's in our blood*. In Indians' blood'.[18] The idea behind this biological metaphor was one of seemingly given ways of seeing and knowing that could be used to create a desire in the viewer to associate nationality with primordial feelings of religious devotion. Ojha's quote reflects the assumption that the VHP was the exclusive representative of all religious matters. Equally, the complexity of images and narratives as ingredients of diverse cultural practices was ignored as they were forced into an iron corset of continuity and rupture and stamped 'exclusive property' of Hindutva. Framed

in this way, it could be expected that the images would be 'read' and understood instantly, as J K Jain's above quotation suggests.

An earlier reference was made to the shots of Lord Ram that follow the opening scene of *GMH.* According to Rahul T, the editor and cameraman of the video, the Ram posters used in the video were bought at S S Brijbasi & Sons, one of the oldest and most established Indian publishers and distribution houses of calendar art in Old Delhi. Video scriptwriter and narrator Ramesh K elaborates on the reason the posters were chosen: 'Suppose, somebody has got *this* poster in his house, somebody has that poster and they will see one of the posters [in the video], then they will identify with them . . . And these posters are really *very* good-looking!'[19] Via the calendar print, the many routes of the video images of Ram can be traced to a Hindu ritual context in which they serve to establish an intimate relationship between viewer and viewed by means of devotional seeing (*darshan*).[20] Similar images may be found on the walls of almost every Hindu home as well as in public places such as offices and shops.[21] Their ubiquity and the 'omnipraxy'[22] in which they are involved have since contributed to the potential democratization of religious practices and to an increased oscillation between sacred and profane domains, making it even more difficult to distinguish between the two.[23] Such posters suggest the tangibility of hand-tinted photo-studio portraits, especially memorial photographs. And like those studio-photographs, the tender face of Ram too, addresses us with an aura of dense hyper-reality: we can almost touch it as it transcends the plain surface of the printed paper, even the television screen.

Techno-visions of devotion to the nation

In his essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' (1936), Walter Benjamin highlights an idea that seems important for an understanding of the 'translation processes' taking place in Hindutva representation, for example, in the adaptation of Ram posters into a video montage. It draws attention to the role of new media technologies, particularly film, in patterning the viewer's senses by means of mimesis and alterity, or, what Benjamin calls 'tactile appropriation' into everyday habits.[24] Benjamin states:

> Every day the urge grows stronger to get hold of an object at very close range by ways of its likeness, its reproduction. Unmistakably, reproduction as offered by picture magazines and newsreels differs from the image seen by the unarmed eye. . . . The adjustment of reality to the masses and of the masses to reality is a process of unlimited scope, as much for thinking as for perception. [25]

This quote might help us to better understand the video's ability to 'bring closer' a particular object to the viewer so that sensual identification and even, as we shall see below, desire for political transformation projected onto 'wish-images' and evolving within the twilight-zone of magical realism,[26] could be constituted.

GMH tapped into the rich field of cultural production by usurping and quasi-monopolizing calendar prints. However, the video fused visual and political representation into a Hindutva intervisuality by consciously banking on the success of a whole range of other media, such as Amar Chitra Katha comic books or the tele-novella *Ramayan* by Ramanand Sagar.[27] Both media reflect a desire within India's modern urban middle classes to 'bring closer' to themselves manageable capsules of a commodified, 'authentic' and predominantly élitist (Hindu) culture. As shown in the first chapter, the commodification of Indian heritage was heightened under the Rajiv Gandhi-led government. Jain Studios videos must be understood as part of this lineage.

How the *Ramayan* paved the ground for specific aesthetics displayed in *GMH* is of interest to this discussion. The *Ramayan,* broadcast on DD in 1987, had already experimented with the creation of devotional moods (*bhava*) by means of special effects (montage, superimposition, trick photography, dissolving, split-screen effects, colorization and sound effects). There is strong visual reference to religious calendar art and to what I term 'darshan-iconography', that is, an emphasis on the depiction of compassionate relationships between the televised Gods and their devotees through use of close-ups of faces and eyes.[28]

Equally importantly, the sweeping popularity of the *Ramayan* provoked a shift in governmental television policies of self-representation to its citizens. Profiling Doordarshan in the light of Nehruvian 'rationalism', Britta Ohm states that television's task was 'to 'civilize' the image in contrast to its 'vulgar' exuberance elsewhere—abroad and in the country'.[29] Under Rajiv Gandhi's reign of the 1980s, state television overcame its general reluctance to deliver to the people what its representatives perceived as 'vulgar trash' or 'escapist kitsch'.[30] Ohm further proposes that in response to film-based televisual products such as the *Ramayan*, 'viewers began to think of DD as "becoming more realistic now"'.[31]

This observation chimes with claims made by scholars such as W J T Mitchell that we need to acknowledge culturally specific ways of seeing as well as notions of 'reality' and 'fiction'.[32] The reluctance to embrace popular culture was further reduced when the *Ramayan* proved to be a great financial success as well as a channel for Rajiv Gandhi's increasing commodification and appropriation of Hindu thought and practice into politics, selling the serial as a means of 'national integration'. As the *Ramayan* serial gained the status of a

national cult with Lord Ram transforming into a 'real national hero', it further contributed to a particular kind of 'nationalist realism' inherent in the issue-based videos produced for the Ayodhya controversy. In order to mobilize viewers, familiar patterns of seeing were consciously fused with elements of Hindutva doctrine, most of all the politico-religious metaphors of fraternity and *deshbhakti*. Within the realm of the Ayodhya controversy, *GMH* displayed Ram's televisual authority in such a way that personal worship could be quietly and smoothly transferred to the level of political agitation. While Ram was repositioned within a mobilizing narrative of revolutionary and bitter warfare, the viewer was recast in the sacred role of a devout but stern warrior or 'worker' for Ram's divine nation.

In using god posters and drawing upon the *Ramayan*, *GMH* consciously employed two performative tools linked to popular practice. The first was oral tradition, in particular, story-telling through picture scrolls (*chitrakatha*) and/or folk theatre. Rahul T, when he talked about *GMH*, revealed: 'The elders and families would definitely like something they're *being told*, something about religion . . . I think that's why on television in those days . . . any image which used to come on the screen, people used to get almost involved in that.' The second familiar practice, intertwined with the first through its emphasis on marvel and empathy, is that of *bhakti* devotion. By placing the camera's attention right on the god's eyes, the shots reflect elements from *bhakti* poetry in which the reciprocal flow of ocular energies recreates the devotee's reverence as well as the god's blessings as a highly corporeal vision. Furthermore, the posters in *GMH* are accompanied by verses in the style of chanting of devotional hymns (*bhajan* or *kirtan*). With the element of collective chanting also invoking associations with the idea of *satsang* as an assembly of good people, the video narrative points towards the utopian idea of participation in a casteless and classless society of devotees.[33] The phantasmagoria implied in this is that the notion of personal and spiritual salvation embodied in *bhakti* could be metamorphosed into the notion of salvation of the national community through collective and simultaneous devotion. With the suggested transcendence of ritual and socio-political boundaries, the image of a sacred brotherhood emerged to visualize an 'able body' of Hindu society. New nationalist verses also marked the videos' conscious blurring of religious and political landscapes and contributed to the constitution of the 'new citizen' of Hindutva, the *deshbhakta*, along with his duties—'work for the nation' (see Figure 10). The voice-over commentary from *GMH* conflates spiritual empowerment and political agitation with regard to the disputed site:

> Ram is able to do everything with his work. But by asking us to do his work he is doing a great favour to us. He does not need us but he does us a great favour by letting us do his work. This task which is given to us by

Lord Ram, we are determined to complete this task! And Ram's temple will be built at his birth place!

Metaphorically, the nation-temple was not solely to be realised by means of constructing a Ram temple at the disputed site of the Babri mosque but also, like an inner *sanctum sanctorum*, constructing it *inside* every citizen's heart (see Chapter 6).

The ideal national devotee in this regard was allegorized in the figure of Hanuman bending down before, or in a brotherly embrace with, Lord Ram, or opening his chest to reveal Ram and his wife Sita (Figure 18). But Hanuman is also known as leader of the monkey army that helped Ram to claim his wife and kingdom back through battle. Such a 'site' of multiple meaning proved useful for adaptation into Hindutva's rhetoric of sacred violence and shall be returned to below when Walter Benjamin's notion of the 'wish-image' as a model for fusing the old and the new is discussed with regard to the creation of utopian societies.



Figure 18 Hanuman opening his chest to reveal Ram and Sita. Bazaar print, Brijbasi & Sons (1990s). Private collection.

The unspoken promise within this image is that by adopting *deshbhakti*, the supporters of the Ayodhya campaign could hence participate in the political power claimed by the BJP. Not for nothing has the Bajrang Dal, the VHP's militant youth wing, chosen a logo showing Hanuman swinging a club over his head (Figure 19). With many of these 'angry young men' coming from upper castes and lower middle classes, the Bajrang Dal emerged partly from the increasing concern of the urbanized citizenry over political instability and corruption, and the drastic transformations unleashed by economic liberalization and political reforms, in particular, the reservation politics introduced in the late 1980s. Anxious about being silenced, 'left out' or 'left behind', members of the lower middle classes became a fertile field for Hindutva spokespeople to sow their metaphor of a 'revolutionary mass movement' with physical strength and visual presence. The official web site of the Bajrang Dal[34] refers to its members as 'Warriors of the Hindutva Revolution' engaged in public 'awakening campaigns' to protect country, religion and culture. The youth organization was founded by the VHP on a nationwide level in 1986 in



Figure 19 'Service, Protection, Culture'. Bajrang Dal sticker (1990s). Private collection.

order to intensify the Ramjanmabhoomi controversy's presence within the public domain. It is interesting that the VHP could claim legitimacy by hosting two seemingly contradictory agents: sadhus (who 'do not interfere in the day-to-day affairs of the nation'[35]) and 'warriors' involved in mundane political battles. Yet, the fused domains reflect a hierarchization along the same horizontal axis discussed previously with regard to the organic model of society: each limb of the fraternity has its particular function according to social and ritual status.

The Bajrang Dal's slogan is 'Service, Protection and Culture' (*seva, suraksha, samskar*) and their proclaimed aim is 'to respond to attacks on Hindu Society, Faith and Religion . . . (to) put up resistance by democratic means against these forces'.[36] In temporary training camps, its members are taught martial arts like judo and karate as well as the handling of weapons.[37] However, at the level of symbolical representation, the imagery of Hanuman and his army enabled Hindutva ideologues to project an imagined sacred *and* democratic community of selfless warriors loaded with confidence and in possession of a destination. The concluding song in *GMH* reflects the mood of battle quite clearly: 'The demand of the time is: keep awake and keep awakening. And keep on until the boat of the nation has crossed the storm . . . We do not fear thunder nor lightning . . . We accept the challenge and we throw the challenge back'. The song is accompanied by footage of silhouettes of people holding up swords, and this is followed by a montage of a popular poster of Lord Ram supplemented by shots of people bathing in the sacred river Saryu in Ayodhya against a golden sunrise. The political metaphor of the 'boat of the nation', clearly implying a hierarchy in terms of a steersman and his trusting passengers, merges with the image of worshippers, suggesting a horizontal equality and solidarity. The appeal to unite in the 'work for the nation' is coupled with the negotiation of who or what was to be the source of Hindu threat—in the case of the Ayodhya controversy, the secular state and the Muslims. The critique of the current state finds reflection in *GMH* in footage taken from a speech by VHP populist Sadhvi Rithambara. She presents an aggressive vision of *deshbhakti*: 'We have to tell Rajiv Gandhi, you're a traitor against Ram. And the people of India will not let such a man stay on the soil of India. Only the lovers of Ram will be at the seat of power. In the matter of the Ram birthplace, Hindus will not compromise with the government'.[38] *GMH* presents the Hindu past as a mythical Golden Age catastrophically disrupted by first the Muslim invasions, then by colonialism, and finally by the installation of the post-colonial secular nation-state. As a result of these disruptions, the Hindus appear as a people bound not only by faith but also by fate. *GMH* narrates a Sangh Parivar version of the history of the Hindu people as a series of 76 sacred battles against (Muslim) invaders, waged in order to protect a 'threatened

Indian' culture and 'Hindu sentiment'. There is another point related to nationalist devotion that I want to address here: the connection between Hindutva's phantasmagorias, intervisuality and *darshan*-iconography.

Creating hierarchies through vision

Behind the use of performative elements from popular culture, such as storytelling techniques and references to *bhakti* devotion, lies the pedagogic strategy of showing and teaching the people who they are, from a Hindutva doctrine perspective. Familiar techniques and images become integrated within a grand exhibition of Indian/Hindu history and cultural identity. The idea of national identity preserved and displayed in an archive or a public exhibition defines identity as something ready-made for consumption. Furthermore, it enables reference to Hindutva spokespeople as 'curators'. Such 'experts' claim possession of an overall competence to represent. They both select and have the means and authority to show the selected 'items' in a particular and credible order. A video like *GMH* was intended to work as a 'virtual exhibition' that appealed to the viewers, suggesting nearness without revealing its ordering and disciplining structure.

By incorporating popular images into its narrative discourse of nationalist devotion, Hindutva intervisuality relied heavily on the verbal as a source of authoritative interpretation of and control over the image. Meaning emerged from the combination of text *and* image in a linear chain. A calendar image of Lord Ram could be combined with a song in praise of the God-king's glory or with a voice-over commentary suggesting the ongoing humiliation of the 'Hindu sentiment' through the very existence of the Babri mosque and the 'pseudo-secular' state. Cartoon-like drawings that had been specially drawn for *GMH* to suggest one of the many battles conducted by Hindus to 'liberate' the Ramjanmabhoomi site, could be accompanied by war chants and voice-over commentaries highlighting the bravery and martyrdom of Hindu kings (see Figure 11).

In addition to this media-mosaic and the heavy reliance on the 'voice-of-god' (authority of the voice-over commentary[39]), persuasion was also sought by means of a conscious play with iconographies of, and verbal references to, divine vision. As one key line in a video song explains: 'Blessed is he who has seen the child form of the keeper of the world'. The line consciously refers to Tulsidas' *Ramcaritmanas*, a *bhakti* text of the sixteenth century based on discourses of passionate devotion to Lord Rama.

The metaphor of 'the people' as a fraternity of devotees is manifest in various footage of Hindu pilgrims chanting while circling a sacred site or sitting in a circle and reciting sacred verses with their eyes closed. Similarly, a close-up from a popular print of Lord Rama, with his eyes displayed for a split

second between other images, presents him watching over his devotees as they perform their duties, and in turn blessing them with his compassionate gaze. In this respect, *GMH* reflects modern media technology's capacity to visualize the cultural specific language of devotion in terms of the concept of sacred vision, or *darshan*. While this almost dialogic way of editing usually reflects the internal, contemplative mood of the subject, as in the case of the *Ramayan* or spiritual television programmes, this video seems to suggest the viewer's desire to be seen and blessed by the keepers of *Ram rajya* (Ram's rule/ kingdom) or to perform his/her mundane duties. Part Two of *GMH*, documenting the *Ram Shila Puja* itself, carries several scenes in which the camera perpetually oscillates between speeches of political and religious leaders and a seated crowd of enchanted people, staging a virtual and disciplined community of viewers-as-devotees. This editing positions the speaker between religious discourse (*pravacan*) and political agitation.[40] Here, issue-based videos produced by Jain Studios could also draw upon the popularity of audio cassettes, a mass communication medium that was used extensively throughout the Ayodhya controversy in 1989–92. As with video tapes, recorded speeches by oratory leaders circulated within enclosed Sangh Parivar networks, their popularity achieved through a snowball-effect, often despite their being banned.[41] There is an immanent 'dialogue' between speaker and audience as well as moments when the narrative is interrupted in order to allow a direct address to the audience and to extend the hierarchical relationship into the personal domain of the viewer. This is shown, for example, in the chapter opener, where J K Jain addresses the audience as guru to his pupils and devotees.

This example shows that the idealized relationship between active leadership and passive followers is manifest both at the level of content and aesthetic. In such a hierarchically arranged context, I wish to reiterate Sophie Hawkins' appeal to rethink the concept of *darshan*. Several scholars have limited this corporeal experience as devotional 'seeing and being seen by the god/dess'.[42] Hawkins suggested that '(r)ather than understanding *darshan* to be an end in itself . . . it becomes merely one aspect in a repertoire of devotional aspirations that seek union with God'.[43] In the political context particularly, the religious aspect of *darshan* diverts attention from its actual ideological potential. Discussing the visualization of devotion on the Internet, Hawkins defined *darshan* not only as a sacred way of seeing, but also as a means of creating worldly knowledge and power. Her concept of *darshan* as a technique of control can be usefully linked to Michel Foucault's work on panopticism as a technique of the visible.[44] According to Foucault, panopticism, is a form of 'surveillance . . . based on a system of permanent registration'.[45] By incorporating particular images and references in Hindutva rhetoric that enforce the feeling of connectedness in the viewer, control over ways of seeing is sought. Futhermore, Hawkins' proposition on *darshan* can be linked to what Michael Taussig has

called 'controlled mimesis', that is, an 'essential component of socialization and discipline' appropriated for political means.[46] At the content level, the video turns Ram into a symbol of dominance and control, of 'techno-surveillance', as if he would bless only those who support and pay reverence to him. Thus, the interpretation of Ram does not recreate a people's forum but rather the royal *darbar* (court) of the monarch. On the aesthetic level, the video affirms hierarchies through careful editing and the authoritarian voice-over commentary described above. This 'darshan iconography' helps to create an illusion of reality by suggesting to the viewer that he or she witnesses an apparatus-free event. Rahul T comments on the imagined responses of audiences to *GMH*: 'The problem is that they don't understand that this is nothing, this is just a mechanism, just a machine. Everything is basically being made, you know?! And converted into a video. In their mind, they always think that "Wow! It's come on live!" '[47]

It is important to note here that new audiovisual technologies may well increase the viewer's feeling of the sensational and sensual revelation of something behind the visible surface, the premonition of an invisible, overwhelming presence. This could well be one of audiovisual technology's 'magical' aspects in the age of rationality and the experience of modernity, in that it creates 'comfort zones' between fiction and non-fiction in which one can dwell. The calendar prints and other capsules of *darshan*-iconography within *GMH* played a crucial role in that they helped to organize, control and thus ritualize particular ways of seeing. Once they were firmly established as icons of nationality in the linear flow of the video narrative, they appeared as if they had always been a part of this brightly-coloured, moving picture book or exhibition of the alleged ancient Hindu nation-state. National identity could now be presented as a 'natural' gift.

Walter Benjamin (1936) elaborates on this phenomenon when he identifies the work of the cameraman with that of the surgeon who deeply penetrates the 'patient's body' through the construction of an artificial, highly sensual web of reality, thus creating what could be called 'techno-realism'. Using this analogy Benjamin states that the 'representation of reality by film . . . offers, precisely because of the thoroughgoing permeation of reality with mechanical equipment, an aspect of reality which is free of all equipment'.[48] *God Manifests Himself* profited from the invisible presence, or tactile absence, of what may lie behind an image's surface on the retina. Despite, or possibly even because of, its sometimes amateurish appearance, montage construction and its rootedness in popular culture, a video like *GMH* appeals by getting 'under the skin' of the viewer. In this way it presents or, indeed, creates reality as a technological 'second nature' without creaking stages and falling curtains. The camera does not reveal itself before the viewer's eye. It pretends to *be* the viewer's eye. By

fusing familiar and new ways of seeing, video media creates a sensuous intimacy with the viewer and, at the same time, establishes itself as the authoritative voice.

The 'apparatus-free' appeal of *GMH*-footage did not only evolve from the mimetic technique of adapting popular culture but also from the universal aesthetics distinctive to video as a global technology. In his study *On Video*, Roy Armes argues that video technology has a specific aesthetic and is fuelled by a peculiar kind of immediacy that distinguishes it from both television and film.[49] While television is often associated with programmes based on linear and rational arguments, film is identified instead with the intertwined domains of fiction, fantasy and multiple layers of narrative. The video media as it was adapted by Hindutva rhetoric proves Walter Benjamin's theory of the ongoing importance of its mimetic faculty in 'permeating reality' and patterning ways of seeing by fusing both fictional and non-fictional elements in order to convey to the viewer a 'sense of a literal, unmanipulated image'.[50] According to Armes, video is 'literal and actual, but it is not necessarily realistic and never real',[51] for it is always an interpretation and thus manipulated. Jain Studios videos tapped into the opportunities provided by film and television in both their global and their cultural specific histories. This is particularly evident in the two montage scenes I will discuss below, where we find that video allowed new ways of narrating, revealing to the viewer's eyes both the familiar and the visions he or she had so far believed to be invisible. J K Jain's notion of 'infotainment' enjoys additional relevance in that it is precisely the combination of 'information' and entertainment that had the potential to decrease the distance between message and viewers by drawing the viewer into a hyper-real space of authority and wonder.

'Tickling' and teaching with 'wish-images' of nationality

The notion of *deshbhakti* in Hindutva rhetoric reflects the creation of national agency within a Benjaminian sense of seamless 'reality'. With the help of this metaphor, the world became a platform for human action on which references could be made to religion, history and mythology as large storehouses for imaginary staging and mobilization strategies. The mimetic act underlying the creation of such analogies is, as Taussig has put it with regard to Walter Benjamin's work, 'to get hold of something by means of its likeness'.[52] One might get hold of an association previously not made, thereby introducing a new level of symbolic production. Likewise, and possibly connected, a mimetic act might also get hold of the viewer's attention, creating in him or her a moment of surprise and revelation.

The fact that the citizenry was appealed to as a self-empowered and able body of devotees was mentioned earlier. This definition was based on an axis

along which the people, under the guidance of Hindutva leaders, were made to progress from so-called amnesia and paralysis to awakening and self-empowerment. *GMH* and, it could be argued, Hindutva rhetoric as a whole, can be seen as a guided tour through a panoramic exhibition of a virtual collective memory. As indicated above, the images and narratives presented are part of an overall curatorial approach selected from a reservoir of assembled practices and commodity fetishes. The intention behind this was to suggest that a primordial identity was 'slipping away' and that 'authentic' Hinduness or Indianness was misrepresented and/or unrecognised by the current secular government. Part of the panoramic—or panoptic—display of Hindutva Indianness was the portayal of India's diverse culture as a 'self-service shop', stocking anything that deserved the stamp 'fit for nationalism'. Sangh Parivar organizations included in their eclectic pantheon not only Lord Ram, but also freedom fighters, national and regional leaders, ancient kings, deceased anarchists and socialists like Bhagat Singh and Chandrashekar Azad (Figure 20). The concept of 'Mother India' anthropomorphized the nation into an object of devotion.[53] Vested with a biography and a body through which she could be attributed an origin and destiny and under the stern guidance of Hindutva leaders, she was ready-made for reverence by the people.

Yet, to diagnose fetishization alone is not enough. The object of devotion has to be placed in a pedagogic and performative context, in which spectacle and authoritative narratives help to 'trip up sensationalism'[54] in the viewer, as if he or she were entering a fantastic theme park equipped with entertaining



Figure 20 Freedom fighters Chandrashekar Azad and Bhagat Singh, superimposed on an animated scene depicting colonial India. Still from *Unity Pilgrimage*.

and educating surprises to endlessly generate notions of a utopian society. The heightening of sensation occurs in particular as utopian images are juxtaposed with narratives of crisis of national identity and governance. The importance of staging an audiovisual spectacle was highlighted by Prem Sagar, son of *Ramayan* producer Ramanand Sagar, in a manner crucial to the understanding of Jain Studios videos. He explained that neither should 'technique . . . overpower narration, (n)or (should) technique . . . overpower intellect . . . It is to tickle the intellect, to tickle the heart, to tickle the five senses technically'.[55]

Ramayan aside, I argue that Sagar's sensual concept of 'tickling' is an important ingredient in the presentation of Hindutva icons. 'Tickling' is a way of corporeally enchanting or alerting the audience to its own sensual receptiveness. 'Tickling the heart' or the intellect refers to the ability of video to reveal to the viewer something so surprisingly new and yet so familiar and 'natural' that the senses are 'touched'. They are touched by the shock and the rupture evolving from the immediate creation of similarities and differences as elements related to each other through chains of associations and montage. The elements of similarity and collision, condensed in montage, are crucial to new media technology's ability to create, according to Benjamin, 'profane illumination' (*profane Erleuchtung)* in the viewer. Benjamin links visual experience to 'shock' and 'ecstasy', connecting it with the capacity of the individual to overcome religious illumination and aura.[56] 'Tickling' also reflects what Michael Taussig, using Benjamin's ideas on the mimetic faculty in his own discussion of colonial mimicry, refers to as 'sympathetic magic', that is, 'the magic of contact, and that of imitation'.[57] For Taussig, sympathetic magic is a central element of subjectivity and identity construction rooted in corporeal vision as well as a site within the domain of political power.[58]

At the level of political representation, we find similar processes as ideologues and spokespeople attempt to 'tickle' their audiences and potential supporters. To create in the people the desire to 'become conscious' of their nationality is one of the tasks attributed to the new media. This attitude reflects a highly hierarchical, teleological view inherent not only in Hindutva rhetoric but also in other statist modes of self-representation. The 'trick' lies in keeping an authoritative distance from and at the same time attracting the attention of the people. Such a situation can be better understood if we look at Taussig's definition of state fetishism as a: 'peculiar sacred and erotic attraction, even thralldom, combined with disgust, which the State holds for its subjects'.[59] The '*darshan*-iconography' evident in the editing techniques discussed above, reveals this act of self-fetishization and self-display.

Yet how was the commodification of Hindutva ideology and politics into a 'tickling' phantasmagoria imagined to take place? The discourse on visual versus textual competence and power was one such contested site of representation where opinions diverged during the Ayodhya controversy. For

example, while it was cameraman and editor Rahul T's task to take and edit the footage for *GMH*, the video script was developed through close interaction with several consultants, historians and other think-tanks that had been delegated by senior leaders of the VHP and RSS. The consultants wanted the video script to be based on the 'prime authority' of the sacred texts. Rahul T recalls a conflict-loaded event in which he had to convince them that video did not 'work' like a book or a lecture:

> We had a very tough script, you know! I had been telling them that this [Sanskritized Hindi] would be very difficult for a common man to understand. That this was really not necessary. Maybe they wanted to start with a scene from the *Rig Veda* times, or something of that sort. But it was not of importance to the people. So I was stressing how visually we could make it really interesting.[60]

The voice-over commentary in *GMH* is the main source of authority and interpretation keeping the moving images under control. But there are scenes where the linear flow is interrupted by montage and where part of the argument is indeed made by what Rahul T calls the 'visually really interesting'. In these scenes, corporeal visual sensation became the prime tool of authorization.

Witnessing miracles

In order to contextualize the 'sympathetic magic' inherent in some of the issue-based videos produced by Jain Studios, two key scenes shall be discussed in the following pages. They are 'docu-dramas', that is, staged scenes claiming documentary status despite their reliance on constructed settings and actors. The following docu-drama scene from *GMH* takes place in the courtroom of Faizabad High Court in 1950. A Mr K K Nayar, district magistrate, addresses a man in the witness box who is identified as *havildar* (guard) Abu'l Barakat. He is dressed in what looks like a police-uniform and, by the beard he wears, is clearly marked as a Muslim. Nayar asks Barakat about the events on the night of 22 December 1949 at the site of the Babri Masjid. The witness reports that he was on duty at the site: 'To make sure nothing wrong happens there'.[61] The camera moves to a close-up of Barakat's face as he describes the events of that night: 'Around 2 o'clock I suddenly saw moonlight striking the masjid, strong light, becoming even stronger'. We now see shots of lightning, and of the guard shielding his eyes as if he gazed back in time. Chanting begins with a song dedicated to the God-king, 'Victory to Ram' (*Jai Ram*). Barakat lowers his hands and continues his report: 'With that strange, strong light I saw a beautiful boy of about four or five years. I could see his face clearly, his hair was curly, his body very beautiful. In my entire life I have not seen such an innocent and

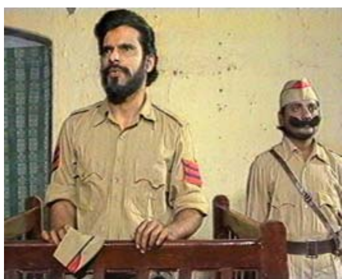


Figure 21 Staged court scene of guard Abu'l Barakat's revelation of the Ramlalla miracle in 1949. Still from *GMH*.



Figure 22 Ramlalla appearing behind the locked gates of the mosque. Ibid.



Figure 23 District Judge Nayar. Ibid.



Figure 24 Ramlalla special effect. Ibid.



Figure 25 Barakat shedding his eyes from the epiphany's light ('I saw a bright light…'). Ibid.



Figure 26 Ramlalla with bow, with cosmic backdrop. Ibid.



Figure 27 Barakat praying. Ibid.



Figure 28 Portrait of Ramlalla. Ibid.

beautiful child. Oh God! [the word used is the Arabic *khudha*]'. The witness lifts his hands and raises his eyes to the ceiling as if praying. The next image cuts to dark iron gates, against which, in a glowing light, a child appears, dressed in what looks like a royal gown, holding a bow and arrows in his hands. The camera gives a close-up shot of the child's face as it looks through the iron bars at the viewer, smiling sweetly. The song carries on: 'He had become manifest, the merciful son of Kaushalya, beloved of the saints and gods, with beautiful eyes. Blessed is the one who has seen the child form of the keeper of the world' (Figures 21–28). Then the camera takes us away on an excursus into what is presented as Ram's childhood days. We see him with his mother, playing happily on big lawns beside a palace-like building, then performing *puja* (worship) with her in front of a *shivlingam* (phallic idol). Again, the narrative cuts back to the courtroom scene, where Barakat, the guard, seemingly awoken from his dream, states: 'When I regained my senses, I saw that the lock on the door was broken, and in the temple [the mosque] there were lots of Hindus. There was an idol on a throne and people were worshipping that idol, singing happily!' The footage now displays a group of seated Hindus singing *bhajans* immersed in their trance (Figure 29).

The scene centred on the epiphany of *Ramlalla* (child Ram) provides interesting material to discuss nationalist realism as a site for negotiating the idea of the fetish as an instrumental commodity [62] *and* as a creative agent of



Figure 29 Hindu devotees singing *bhajans* after Ramlalla's epiphany. Still from *GMH*.

persuasion and desire. Surely, the fetish marks the experience of modernity through an enthusiastic projection of free flows of people, goods, ethics and interests. Its fixating and instrumentalizing function derives to a large extent from the European Enlightenment's construction of it as an exotic and fascinating object,[63] or a 'metaphor of magico-religious control'.[64] However, to refer back to the statement that 'fetishization is not enough', and encouraged by Laura Mulvey's work on *Fetishism and Curiosity* (1996), I want to stretch the notion of the commodity fetish as it is reflected in the works of Karl Marx or Sigmund Freud, arguing that its reading as an object of economic order, psychic compensation and repression, while not false, is too limited when we try to understand Hindutva rhetoric.[65] Instead, a discussion of the video as 'mimetic machinery' shall be proposed in which imagination is seen as a part of social practice, mobilizing and constituting national identity by means of what Walter Benjamin calls 'wish-images'. Benjamin aims at using the idea of the 'wish-image' to expand the narrow discussion of fetish as a solely economic force by stressing its inherent capacity to impact on ways of seeing and experiencing. Analysing the video episode of Barakat's vision as a 'wish-image' can shed more light on the role of media and imagery as part of socio-political agency. In his *Arcades Project* on the rise of capitalism and the material culture of phenomena such as metropolitan cities and world exhibitions in late nineteenth century Western Europe, Benjamin defines 'wish-images' as 'images in the collective consciousness in which the old and the new interpenetrate'.[66] He links the idea of social transformation by means of new technologies to the underlying forces of imagination and imagery and further elaborates on 'wish-images':

> . . . in them the collective seeks both to overcome and to transfigure the immaturity of the social product and the inadequacies in the social organization of production . . . In the dream in which each epoch entertains images of its successor, the latter appears wedded to elements of primal history—*Urgeschichte*—that is, to elements of a classless society. And the experiences of such a society—as stored in the unconscious of the collective—engender . . . the utopia that has left its trace in a thousand configurations of life . . . [67]

In the court scene from *GMH* we find a clear articulation of new technology's ability to reveal an invisible object of desire, a utopian society, creating nearness by means of 'a spectacle unimaginable anywhere at any time before this . . . immediate reality'.[68]

The video scene presents the 'miracle' of *Ramlalla*'s epiphany as an actuality ('historical evidence'). This is done is through montage, that is, the editing of different footage, images and narrative elements. In montage, the creation of

similarities and their combination with opposites is meant to provoke ruptures and shock effects in the viewer that can then be used to insert 'information'. Cameraman Rahul T's reflection on his work is full of the thrill of such a media spectacle as a quasi-magical catalyst of nationalist realism that brings the object sensually close to the viewer. This becomes especially evident in his memory of the unexpected success of *GMH*, mainly among Sangh Parivar supporters during the Ayodhya campaign. Commenting on the docu-drama scene featuring the *Ramlalla* miracle in *GMH*, Rahul T conveys his fascination with new technology's capacity to create a tactile 'utopian' or 'magical' realism by fusing myth and history, the old and the new:

> I'm not here to decide and say that there was a Ram temple. But suddenly, or through all those books on history that I was given for the reference of making the film, it certainly inspired me that 'why shouldn't one make a film which could probably tell a story that the books have been saying'? But I still think that all these stories, like the one on that particular date when that lock had been broken and an image of god appeared, the child Ram appeared on the scene, that was the first that could be a fantasy, that is certainly a fantasy. And how probably that has been mentioned in the books, I don't know . . . It's always that now when I read about the Joan of Arc . . . when I read those books I still feel that, how come she could get so much power and energy and all that?! Maybe Christ, you know?! It's really difficult to analyse that *how come these powers*, you know, how come? And how do you believe the things in a book, (believed in) by so many people? Anyhow, that whole excitement was there for me to re-create in that film . . . That was an *energy*, that was a *source* [of inspiration].[69]

This quotation illustrates Rahul T's perception that video technology could employ particular 'wish-images' like visual mantras to capture imaginary interiorities and release powers to such an extent that they revealed themselves as if they were an actuality. It seems as if, like in Hawkins' description of religious devotion and new technologies, '[t]he boundaries of logic are for a moment conflated, and a third space is entered; a third space that mediates (and is mediated by) the real and the imagined, the actual and the virtual, the lived and the desired'.[70]

In the above commentary, Rahul T claims to have found inspiration in the depiction of child Ram's story. But the quote also shows that he was torn between the tensions arising from the overlapping of two frames of reality that seem somewhat incompatible. Should he depict the myth of Ram's magic appearance at 'his' birth place one night in 1949 as sheer fantasy or should he believe in the force of vision and clairvoyance and, very much like his figure

Barakat, trust his intuition and compare the incident to the magical powers of figures like Joan of Arc or Christ? In seeing film as an exciting means to 're-create' sacred vision, Rahul T also utilized video technology and the technique of montage as a means of telling a panoramic story, presenting 'life with the dull bits cut out'.[71] In hiding the video's constructedness with seamless editing, he imbued the video scenes with visions of re-interpreted collective identities, in particular those of *deshbhakti*. His montages are thus examples of 'moving wish-images' that translate the fantasy of a caste- and classless Golden Age into the utopia of the 'yet unknown' described by Benjamin.

The video sequence evolving around the innocent god-child behind bars and the depiction of its imagined glorious childhood positions the 'Hindu people' in a narrative of crisis constructed around the ideas of collective imprisonment and loss of 'primordial' glory and innocence by merging new ways of seeing (for example, the figure of *Ramlalla* is a new, postcolonial contribution[72]) with new narrative techniques of video technology (montage, superimposition, etc.). In this montage-like context, a figure like the child Ram could become the agent who motivates the Ayodhya campaign.[73] It could legitimize both the imagined viewer's faith towards a mythically 'given' nationality and the desire to 'make history' by uniting against those who allegedly disrupted the 'natural' flow of national history. The legitimacy of 'the Hindu people' to claim back and 'liberate' what is allegedly theirs from its prison is affirmed in the epiphany of Ram in *GMH*, followed by the instalment of the Ram *murti*, as witnessed by the Muslim guard. The depiction of Hindu devotees assembling inside the mosque forms a *tableau vivant* as well as a stage for the final re-appropriation and transformation of space, site and identity affirmed by the 'legitimate' owners.

Linked to the Hindu Golden Age, the 'wish-image' of *Ramlalla* encouraged a narrative discourse on the basis of a crisis (the 'recent past' of Mughal invasion and British colonialism), a crisis to be overcome by the Hindu people's desire for a utopian vision. The use of fetish as a Benjaminian 'wish-image' permits us to consider that the transformation of the 'religious cultic image' to the 'political cultic image' took place in the process of blurring of notions of mythic and historical time and space, and of Ram both as mythical and national man. Furthermore, it draws attention to the important role of desire and imagination in this visual transformation, as discussed in the section above on the ambiguous 'wish-image' of Hanuman and its relation to *bhakti* devotion and *deshbhakti*, devotion and violence, divine Ram Rajya and degenerate, current epoch, '*kaliyug*'. Similarly, at one level Barakat's vision of *Ramlalla* may have appealed to the viewer as a fetish in that it suggested a seductive intimacy with the viewer. But Barakat's amazement and submission to that vision at the end of the sequence makes *Ramlalla* operate as a 'wish image' that, beyond fetish,

becomes a tool for Hindutva's culturalist discourse on power. The reference to Ram's life as a god-king of Ayodhya, exiled for years before returning to Ayodhya to reinstall his kingdom and *Ramlalla's* epiphany in 'his' birth temple, become metaphorical strategies of 'tickling' the collective imagination by associating them with notions and narratives of the 'homelessness' and 'exile' of the Hindus. The claims for the Ram temple, whether made by the adult king or child, could thus be identified with a collective re-claiming of 'home'.

The longing for socio-political transformation 'from exile to homeland' was explicitly given expression in a BJP manifesto which defined Hindutva as a revolutionary force that moulds 'the nation we dreamt of on the dawn of Independence'.[74] The BJP's expression of that longing for self-realization confirms Benjamin's attentiveness to the implicit ambiguity of 'wish-images'. He indicates that, as a site within the domain of play, desire and fantasy, the 'wish image' might not just encourage democratization and the constitution of a creative and subjective subject that explored fields of action.[75] Yet, it could also at times result from and/or invite ideological abuse by authoritarian systems through their mimetic practices of re-auratization and monumentalization.[76] The story of *Ramlalla*'s appearance shows that Freudian fetish and Benjaminian 'wish-image' fuse when political élites call people into a specific place, position them firmly with narratives of crisis and threat, and at the same time promise empowerment, participation and the divine pleasure of finally restoring the purportedly lost (*darshanic*) unity with the desired object.

Making history 'real'

It has been mentioned above that the source of *God Manifests Himself's* script was a written text provided by the VHP. It is interesting to note here that the literary sources of 'historical information' were most probably produced in the 1970s, if not earlier.[77] Thus, the RSS, VHP and BJP monopolized the dispute surrounding the Babri mosque by drawing upon passions or disillusionment articulated within segments of society that were already established and circulated before the temple-mosque dispute achieved national prominence.

The story of the Muslim guard's vision was not arbitrarily chosen as a key scene for *God Manifests Himself*. On the one hand, the blurring of myth and history in the scene reflects a specific notion of history. The Sanskrit word for 'history', *itihasa,* is heard frequently throughout *GMH*. The concept of *itihasa* enjoyed a renaissance during the Ayodhya controversy because of its capacity to embrace both myth and history. As Philip Lutgendorf has noted, the strength of this notion of 'history' also lies in the fact that it is 'imbued with a nostalgic reverence' with links to metaphors of recovery, restoration and purified revival.[78] On the other hand, a scene like this could be imagined and staged only with the help of new audiovisual technology. The video montage is based

on docu-drama, that is, in this case, the re-staging of a mythic-historical event by using actors and voice-over commentary as if it were a scene from a documentary film. It appears paradoxical that, between the blurred categories of realism and fiction, docu-drama allows for the shaping of a 'greater historical accuracy'.[79] It certainly attempts to do so in the case of *GMH*, when the 'historical accuracy' of the miracle is juxtaposed with the current governmental interpretations.

The court scene from the video is based on historical fact: On 29 December 1949, the district magistrate Mr Nayar investigated the matter of the alleged appearance of an idol of Lord Rama on the night of 22–23 December. The appearance of an idol in the mosque therefore is 'factual'. In-between, however, we find the staging of a fictional story displayed in the realist mode. This occurs through the narration of the guard Barakat's vision in which 'footage' of Ram's epiphany and childhood life enter the 'real' world and where the showing of the idol could be presented as a sacred revelation to all those who witness it. Furthermore, the courtroom as the backdrop for the unfolding of the plot is important too. Here, 'objective evidence' and authority of the divine manifestation can be symbolically secured.

The video scene of the miraculous epiphany of Ramlalla in 1949, followed by the installation of Ram's idol inside the mosque, was only one version enabling Sangh Parivar spokespeople to claim historical evidence of what 'really happened'. Another was that on 22 December 1949, 50 to 60 Hindus had entered the mosque and placed a Ram statue inside, thereby converting the mosque into a temple.[80] The 'miracle' sparked a discussion among governmental and religio-political groups involved in the Ayodhya controversy about the governmental legitimacy of regulating access to the site. Hindu and Muslim groups claimed that the disputed site was *their* site of worship and that the Constitution granted them the right to exercise their respective religious beliefs. Because of this, they could demand the state's protection of their interest. In 1986, the gates of the Babri mosque were finally unlocked after the Faizabad District Court passed an order to the Government of UP; Hindu *puja* was allowed.[81] As a 'wish-image', Barakat's vision fused the instalment of the idol in 1949 and the opening of the locks in 1986 into one incident, generating a narrative filled with a magical/nationalist realism of its own kind.

The many faces and meanings of Lord Ram

What meaning could the depiction of Lord Ram as a 'wish-image' assemble in its image/ry space? The poster and docu-drama shots in *God Manifests Himself* described so far display Ram in a benign, tolerant and peaceful manner as if he were a close relative smiling at the cameraman in a photo-studio. There is also the 'family-constellation' with his wife Sita, his brother Lakshman, and

Hanuman, his loyal devotee and monkey servant.[82] However, though absent from the video, there is yet another image of Ram that enforces the narrative of *GMH* as if it were secretly pulling many of the strings that make the video's images move. This image catered to the feeling of anger and the atmosphere of battle that were deployed to mobilize supporters for the Ayodhya campaign. In symbiosis with his childhood representative, *Ramlalla*, a martial adult Ram was transposed into Hindu nationality as eternal pride and the creation of a desire for 'revenge' through political agency. The result was a Ram similar to a figure from a Hollywood or Asian martial arts film,[83] a muscular hero holding up bow and arrows aimed at an invisible goal outside the pictorial frame, his strong body emerging out of the proposed temple model, his *dhoti* moving in an apocalyptic thunderstorm in fire-filled skies (Figure 30). While the video-*Ramlalla* gazes cheerfully at the viewer, this 'Schwarzenegger'-Ram keeps his eyes turned firmly away from him or her. And while *Ramlalla's* childhood is set in Arcadia, exile or imprisonment, the adult Ram is poised for the battle for 'liberation'.



Figure 30 Ram emerging from the proposed Ram temple. Sangh Parivar sticker (1990s).

Some scholars have pointed out the increasing display of masculinity on the Hindutva stage. Anuradha Kapur,[84] for example, has linked this Ram iconography ('*Ram*bo') to the assertion of male chauvinism embedded in Hindu nationalism.[85] The display of physical strength was seen as the modern contribution to the depiction of what had once been an imaginary 'metaphoric space'.[86] Kapur has further rightly emphasized that the new iconography reflects a shift in composition and perception, an insertion of historical, physical time and experience into the compositions of previously 'timeless', silent dream-space.[87] However, this iconographic shift does not represent a strictly teleological development that can be solely attributed to Hindutva nationalism. Rather, what we find here is the mimetic adaptation of what Christopher Pinney has defined as 'colonial perspectivalism', that is, works of art composed in single-point perspectives derived from the European genre of history painting,[88] many of which revolve around the idea of the modern nation-state. Thus, Hindutva iconography has to some extent come to be part and parcel of a wider process of what I would call 'internalized Orientalism' (see also Chapter 4).[89] Likewise, the iconographic shift does not signify that one depiction has come to exclusively replace another. By attributing one meaning to an image, scholars often tend to sideline the complex interaction of images, narratives and styles that coexist and/or fuse in the hybrid space of an intervisuality that is itself made up of several webs of meaning and fields of power in a specific socio-political context.[90] Following from this is the suggestion that the authority of modular realism inherent in many discussions of popular culture requires differentiation.[91]

In his exploration of the representations of the colonizing self and the colonized other during the Age of Discovery, Stephen Greenblatt discusses the intertwined relationship between production and reception. He emphasizes that 'the very words *marvel* and *wonder* shift between the designation of a material object and the designation of a response to the object, between intense, almost phantasmagorical inward states and thoroughly externalized objects that can, after the initial moments of astonishment have passed, be touched, catalogued, inventoried, possessed'.[92] It shall be argued that this discourse about early colonial representation techniques proves useful for a discussion of postcolonial predicaments, too. Furthermore, although there is no direct link to Benjamin's notion of the 'wish-image' here, the quote touches upon similar questions that are connected to this chapter's discussion of 'tickling'. Greenblatt's alignment of imagination, power and representation into an axis might help us examine the following observations about the dynamics between image (as vessel and catalyst) and the production of meaning. In the case of the Ayodhya controversy, the Sangh Parivar's personification of Lord Ram as a national hero with an almost filmic biography shows that a

range of representations of him were used to both 'explain' and enhance particular feelings in the viewer. So, for example, the alleged anger and impatience felt by Hindutva activists over the refusal of the secular government and some Muslim groups to hand over the Babri mosque. From such a perspective, offence and violence could be re-interpreted as justified defence. In response to my earlier question, as to why Ram could be depicted in a peaceful effeminate mood and yet be linked to a rhetoric of war and revenge, several RSS and VHP spokespersons explained that this was not contradictory at all, only logical. Ram, so ran the explanation, reacted out of compulsion and provocation created by others, not by himself. This argument is often used to explain the violence carried out by *kar sevaks* during the Ayodhya campaign: Presenting the Hindu people as 'essentially peaceful', as in the 'family-constellation' mentioned above, they sought to legitimize their violent action related to the disputed site. *Deshbhakti* was glorified and most of all, commodified, into an ideal type of agency as selfless sacrifice and martyrdom for the 'well-being of the nation'. Like Ram, the *deshbhakta* became a paradoxical 'wish-image' as it united both the devotee peacefully taking a bath in the holy river and the saffron-clad warrior holding hammer and pickaxe. The scene that opens with those images and their manifold associations and hi/stories, reveals the ecstatic relationship between 'phantasmagorical inward states and thoroughly externalized objects' as they are translated as objects of desire and fear, like curious objects exhibited on the stage of a *tableau vivant*. How curiosity is closely linked to the creation of stereotypes (as 'abnormality') will be discussed over the following pages.

Creating the 'Other' through the montage of oppositions

> There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. [93]

Benjamin's argument that 'wish-images' can be employed to liberate and contemplate or to further enhance cultic—and totalitarian—values was mentioned earlier.[94] The act of drawing borders is discussed in this last section of the chapter, where Hindutva ideologues' attempts to use 'wish-images' to enhance and affirm communal stereotypes in the context of the Ayodhya controversy are discussed.[95] In form and content, Hindus and Muslims are 'put in place'. By this performative practice of drawing borders and positioning social agents, access to (political) power was promised to the Hindu audiences as they were drawn into an invisible script of strategies of inclusion ('if you become like us, we will install a society of equals') and exclusion ('if you do not, conflict-loaded collision is inevitable'). The strategy of ethno-politically motivated stereotypification in this context, I argue, relies heavily on a combination of narrative and spectacle by means of montage technique.

Another montage scene in *GMH* proves useful to discuss the visualization and narration of communal stereotypes as requisites of Hindutva rhetoric. These are manifest in Hindutva spokespeople's effort to affirm and dramatize 'Hindu sentiment' as compassionate on one hand, and 'aggressive anti-national Muslim' on the other. In this montage, the mythic Arcadia (embodying Ram's life as god-king) and linear history (invasion of India by Muslim forces resisted by Hindu kings, saints and ordinary people) are fused and forced into one linear narrative. Hindus are presented as innocent victims suffering from various losses that become manifest in the alleged homelessness and weakness of the Hindu community due to an ongoing history of suppression and misrepresentation.

Between the introductory shots of posters of the doe-eyed Ram smiling peacefully and the re-telling of the guard Barakat's vision of the epiphany, lies a sequence that inserts itself trauma-like into the flow of visuals and stories of Hindu glory and pride. It is the unravelling of the history of heroic Hindus fighting battle after battle against the Mughal invaders. Roughly translated from the Hindi original, the voice-over commentary states: 'In our life there came a time when we could not save our identity. Foreign and infidel, member of another religion, a ruler called Babar attacked our motherland. His intention was to spread an empire in India. He reached on March 23, 1528'. Footage of invading horsemen appearing on the horizon of India's plains is inserted into the flow of images. Screaming, shouting and the sound of canon-fire and galloping horses fill the ears as our eyes follow the footage of, what looks like, Mongol horsemen. Holding swords in their hands, clad in turbans and with wild beards, they roll angrily, and apparently unstoppably, over the land. One of the shots of invading hordes even carries the date of the invasion in the Devanagari script. The voice-over continues: 'Mir Baqi Khan was their General. They spread great terror and devastation. They wanted to destroy the morale of the Hindus and this was their call. To do this, they made the demonic plan to destroy Hindu temples'. Then, a popular print of Guru Nanak as witness of this attack appears as the commentator quotes from the Guru Granth. This is a marker both of 'neutral authority' and the appropriation of Sikhism into the 'Hindu fold'.[96] In one attack after another, Hindus are defeated and made martyrs. The voice-over commentary declares that Hindu resistance against the invading forces began to be organized, even though it was a fragmented resistance. A docu-drama scene is then deployed to narrate the historic meeting of queen Rajkumari and Swami Maheshwaram who purportedly decided to join their armed forces in order to attack Babar's men. Says the saint: 'The enemies will be punished. We will have to give sacrifices, but each sacrifice will make the Mughals bear the cost' (Figures 31–36).

In *GMH,* montage is created through the combination of different media (fiction, film, docu-drama, comic, miniature paintings, special effects, archival



Figure 31 Film still from a scene allegedly depicting the invasion of Mir Baqi's army in 1528. Stills from *GMH* and *From the River*. . .



Figure 32 Ibid.



Figure 33 Ibid.



Figure 34 Ibid.



Figure 35 Ibid.



Figure 36 Queen Rajkumari and Swami Maheshwaram discuss a strategy for their united battle against the Mughal Babar. Still from docu-drama scene in *GMH*.

footage, off-screen sound) in order to engender a feeling of disharmony between invaded Hindus and invading Muslims. Ruptures and density pattern the video's montaged narrative: the battle-scene itself is notable for its interruption of the peaceful flow of Ram portraits, while the voice-over commentary covers a period of more than 300 years of invasions. Feelings of sublime comfort and beauty invoked by the god posters are juxtaposed with feelings of discomfort and horror produced by the footage of a terrorized India. Shots of running horses, canons and Mughal emperors (represented in miniature portrait) appear time and again, edited against comic-strip style cartoons, to suggest ongoing battle.[97] The atmosphere of the timeless flow of the Hindu Golden Age is torn apart by loud and violent montages of war scenes. These constellations 'tickle' the viewer and create in him or her notions of surprise, if not shock. For a moment, rational logic is suspended or paralysed. It is in this 'third space' that the blurring of fiction and reality allows for discourses of power and fear to be inserted. In such a moment, stereotype comes to act as a performative site or, in Homi Bhabha's words, a 'scene of fetishism',[98] in which the 'wish-images' created by Hindutva rhetoric come to demarcate both pleasure and (xeno-)phobia, notions of superior mastery and complete loss of control.

In his exploration of the representational practices of discovery and colonization of the New World by Europeans, Greenblatt has outlined narrative as a host of discursive strategy to 'pull' a reader/viewer into its own logic and thus, realism. Greenblatt writes: 'It is one of the principal powers of narrative to gesture toward what is not in fact expressed, to create the illusion of presences that are in reality absent'.[99] I suggest that through the ordering of video montage, this 'illusion of presence'—of an otherwise absent Other—can be created. Spectacle is another important ingredient, even embodiment, of the production of pleasure and fear, self and radical difference, and thus, realism.[100] Positioned at the crossroads of production and reception, oscillating between narrative and spectacle, the viewer's imagination emphatically steps in where realism would possibly otherwise fail.

Narrative and spectacle also play an important role in the constitution of a video like *GMH*. Rahul T would have liked to reconstruct the invasion scene in a Hollywood-style setting. Instead, the small budget forced him to get blurred, second-class footage from a local video library in Delhi:

> Had we been with a better quality of technicalities, I would have got better special effects and obviously better shootings, like the ones I got from different foreign films. Of course, I would have really loved to have maybe 1,000 horses and a big field and maybe warriors! I would have *loved* to shoot that. Invasion scenes I would have loved! Of course, the budget was not available. That was something I had in mind when the script was still on; the whole impact of this *feeling* of how probably the

> invasions would have been in those kinds of times: with horses and elephants! And you would have these *huge* armies (he spreads his arms) from both sides. It would have been terrific! . . . Like Ben Hur! I have seen those movies and maybe those images have stuck in my mind because of this *massive* scale.[101]

Somehow, the blurred and crude images of invading Mughals, especially when juxtaposed with the clear and still faces of Ram on the bazaar posters, almost naturally fall into place with what could be called 'the aesthetics of communal difference'.

The notion of the aggressive and alien anti-national Muslim is deeply embedded in RSS ideological doctrine through chief ideologue Veer Savarkar's evocation of the Muslim as the 'threatening Other',[102] and perhaps also influenced by orientalist stereotypes of a threatening Islam. The key narrative translating this notion into various sub-narratives of Hindutva rhetoric today is that *desh* and *deshbhakta* could in theory be united. But history's course and both present-day 'anti-national' Muslims and the 'pseudo'-secular state are said to consciously 'disturb' the imagined nationalist romance of desiring agent with Mother India. Video technology, montage and 'wish-images' seem to be ideal techniques to create in the viewer a feeling of instability and of crisis (displacement). Images of rupture and shock convey the underlying idea that the utopian *Ram rajya* has been destroyed, thus rendering homeless its original inhabitants who are doomed to wander in search of what had been taken from them. The emotional stakes are upped even further, when, in finding a part of their lost home in Ayodhya, the same people are once again depicted as alienated by the new power players, that is, the secular government and Muslim groups. As a consequence, montage also attempts to provoke mobilizing tensions imbued with the feeling that 'enough is enough'.

The video montage of invasion and battles is indicative of an effort to create a new history for India by using fragments of the past and arranging it into the 'mocked order'[103] of the new audiovisual media. The chain of 'wish-images and intervisual associations follows a logic similar to the principle of montage which Taussig describes as 'the ability . . . to provoke sudden and infinite connections between dissimilars in an endless or almost endless process of connection-making and connection-breaking'.[104] As' wish-images', Ram and the utopian idea of *Ram Rajya* promise a better future to loyal worshippers of the nation. Evolving from the restructuring of such connections, the (male) 'Muslim Other' seems to have just two 'choices'. He can metamorphose into a Ram devotee, like the guard who affirms Ram's superior existence in the witness box, thus magically merging with the 'Hindu way of life'. Or he can remain part of the associative chain of Mughal invasions: alien, aggressive, threatening, hence: anti-national. One follows the ideal-type of the devout *deshbhakta*, the

other remains or becomes a traitor against which all strategies of 'self-defence' can legitimately be played out.

It is necessary to understand that recognition, freedom and tolerance only come to 'work' in a particular frame of order, and that consensus about their fabric has to be shared by every member of this order. Richard Burkhart refers us to the fact that in Hindu religious practice 'tolerance of others takes place, but at the cost of their otherness'[105] and that 'tolerance is not so much an act of mutual respect as it is an act of organizing hierarchical relations within a common frame'.[106] This can be applied to Hindutva rhetoric and its strategies of stereotyping by means of metaphors and 'wish-images'.

The connection of the stereotype to phantasmagoria through the use of 'wish-image', metamorphosis and spectacle in a video like *GMH* enables us to understand magical realist strategies as part of Hindutva ideology as a 'wish machine'. This term, deriving from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's work on ideology and imagination, suggests that ideologies function through the discourse of desire.[107] Like ideology, desire simultaneously binds and sets the agent free, appropriating his or her wishes, experiences or ways of seeing and metamorphosing them into 'realities'. Hindutva ideology employs the discursive power of desire by translating it into a response to crises, lacks or deficiencies. Video technology heightened their ability to pattern ways of seeing and experiencing in this context, making visible and 'bringing close' to the viewer what might until then have been connoted as 'de-touched' and faceless.

Concluding notes

This chapter explored how rhetoric strategies were inscribed with the mimetic adaptation of already circulating narratives, iconographies and genres from the sphere of popular visual representations, political and religious practices. New meaning evolved as a result of a play with familiar imagery and narratives as these were situated in a new or altered context of dichotomies such as crisis and solution, exile or imprisonment and liberation, stereotypes of 'tolerant Hindus' and 'aggressive Muslims' or ignorant government, and so on. Amidst this process of connection-making and -breaking in the videos, Hindutva spokesmen attempted to translate the abstract idea of nationalism into both a magical and natural object to be addressed with primary loyalties and obligations based on the intimate familial relationship of *deshbhakti*. To present their claims as legitimate and credible, they shaped their communication means on the basis of a dynamic practice of intervisuality that not only connected different aesthetic realms, but also created references to a primordial shared national past and 'language' that is interpenetrated, by means of 'wish-images', with a strong desire for utopia. This enabled the social agents to imagine that they could assemble, bind and position the people firmly under

the umbrella of Hindutva's fetishized ideology. However, the terrain of self-representation itself was contested as various ideas about communication and the disciplining of the imagined audiences existed among Hindutva representatives, for example, when authorities of and relations between text and image came to be negotiated. Indoctrination via narrative and spectacle, entertainment and 'information' enshrined in the dense aesthetic network of montage, magical realism and mimesis, were the means through which the Hindutva ideologues tried to 'tickle' their audiences during the height of the Ayodhya campaign around 1990. Yet, like their masters, a video such as *GMH*, working with the concept of montage that is generally open to playfulness, deployed the very same mechanism of seemingly all-embracing inclusion as a means of appropriation. A method by which Hindutva culture—as well as video culture—takes a local characteristic, fits it into the emporium of images that map their ideas, and thus render them flattened to all other images. Each becomes another substanceless unit in a sea of such units, so that we can actually say—and see—'unity in diversity'.

At the same time, the Hindutva rhetoric of people's empowerment was based on the power of pleasure and phobia. While imagery, narratives and script enabled visions of a potent and 'able body' of the Hindu brotherhood on the one hand, the viewers were 'tamed' by metamorphosing them into disciplined, infantile devotee-machines and selfless martyrs on the battlefield of nationalism on the other. Equally, the threatening 'Other' came to be fixed as the stereotype of the Muslim.

Until May 2004, the BJP was at the helm of the Indian government, however, in a big coalition. As a consequence, both the relationship of the BJP toward the 'wicked beast' of nationality and the question of visibility and display had to be negotiated anew as the party entered new political power relations. In this context, issues that were once used to provoke conflict had to be tackled more carefully. A shop-owner of a Sangh Parivar paraphernalia shop in Delhi in 1997 pulled out copies of *GMH* and of other related videos for me. Both the expression on his face and the layer of dust on the video covers indicated that a new era of audiovisual representations and political performances had begun. But even if *GMH* may not be used for mobilization again, its images and rhetoric, which contribute to the dense interocularity constituting Hindutva's visual culture, may well still hover around backstage and enforce new media performances, or phantasmagorias.

4

RE-MAPPING THE NATION-SPACE: PLACE AND DISPLACEMENT

> The imagined landscape is the most powerful landscape in which we live . . . (A)ll of us, individually and culturally, live in the mappings of our imagined landscape, with its charged centres and dim peripheries, with its mountain tops and its terrae incognitae, with its powerful sentimental and emotional three-dimensionality, with its bordered terrain and the loyalty it inspires, with its holy places, both private and community shared.[1]

> Every single mountain and river, big or small, named or unnamed, covering the body of Bharat Mata (India), has the imprint of divinity and history . . . of our unifying National Consciousness. While on the one hand they have been the traditional abodes of gods and goddesses, they have also stood as shields of protection and security for our people against the foreign aggressors . . . these centres have acted as bulwarks for preserving the nation's psyche rich with the spirit of cultural and spiritual oneness. . . . They also wake us up to the urgent and paramount need for putting our Hindu house in order for ensuring the eradication of all such blots of foreign domination and keeping aloft the flag of national honour ever high hereafter.[2]

Made in 1990, *From the Sea to the Saryu* (*Sagar se saryu tak*, Hindi; hereafter *From the Sea . . .*) presents the 'patriotic pilgrimage' (*deshbhakti ki teerth yatra*) of BJP president L K Advani from Somnath, a town by the Indian Ocean in Gujarat, to Ayodhya in the state of Uttar Pradesh. The long journey through the 'Hindi belt' is also referred to as a 'pilgrimage of Ram's chariot' (*Ram Rath Yatra*) and as we virtually travel alongside the camera that accompanies the *yatra*, we encounter a whole range of elements of political iconography and rhetoric engaged in the imaginary constitution of so-called 'true Indianness'.[3] Advani is often presented as he stands victoriously on top of a Toyota van converted into a pink chariot, a modern temple on wheels with attached



Figure 37 L K Advani on his chariot during the *Ram Rath Yatra* (1990). Still from *From the Sea*. . .

hoardings of lotus flowers and the universal mantra *OM*, and 'drawn' by two cut-out lions mounted on each side of the van (Figure 37). The video stages Advani as a saviour of the Hindu people and merges him in a narrative of national crisis and state of emergency. It does so by depicting the heroic sacred battle of the charismatic leader against a purportedly anonymous, unjust and illegitimate government. We learn that his task was to challenge the government in power because it deeply humiliated the 'sentiment' of the Hindu people. Throughout the journey, people who come to celebrate and support this staged mass spectacle are shown. While on the soundtrack, we find an assemblage of slogans and songs of victory and devotion, authoritative voice-over commentaries and extracts from seemingly endless speeches of leaders, on the visual level there is a repetitive *mis-en-scène* of shots of local groups performing folk dances and religious rituals in traditional costumes (Figure 38). Montages, for example, of bazaar prints displaying a compassionately smiling God-king Rama, silhouettes of maps of colonial or postcolonial India, cartoons presenting ancient battle-scenes of Hindu peoples against Mughal invaders, and footage of what looks like hordes of wild horsemen roaming the country in apocalyptic settings. Advani and other regional and national leaders aligned to the Sangh Parivar evolve into charismatic saviours who have descended to earth in order to support the people in their daily struggles and relieve them from suffering.

The voice-over in *From the Sea* . . . announces that the pilgrimage's aim is to contribute to the liberation of the alleged birthplace of Ram in Ayodhya (by



Figure 38 Shot of folk dancers. Still from *Unity Pilgrimage*.

removing the Babri mosque). The plan, explains the commentary, was to build a Ram temple at that disputed site, thus substituting 'the symbol of slavery' for 'a symbol of national pride and self-confidence'. But the *yatra* also had a concrete political agenda: On 7 August 1990, Prime Minister V P Singh declared the implementation of a new job quota system recommended by the Mandal Commission. Following the aim to develop criteria for the elevation of underprivileged castes of Indian society, the commission had concluded that 27 per cent of jobs in the central government and public undertaking must be reserved for educationally and socially backward castes, in addition to reservations for scheduled castes and tribes. While the RSS rejected the caste-based quota system as a factor dividing the imagined Hindu nation along the lines of caste difference, the BJP, as minor party within V P Singh's coalition government, feared that its support of the Mandal Commission report would upset members of the upper castes and thus lead to a loss of votes.[4] The party promoted preferential treatment on the basis of economic status and individual merit and performance rather than entitlement through birth.

The chariot and its convoy were scheduled to arrive at Ayodhya on 30 October 1990 to inaugurate a *kar seva* (voluntary devotional service) after travelling through eight states of Northern India, covering 10,000 km and holding numerous public meetings en route. The video linked the idea of pilgrimage to that of the Hindu people's 'national reawakening' and solidarity. Throughout the pilgrimage's itinerary, emotions ran high and tempers were aggravated. The event was paralleled by the tensions and rioting between

members of Hindu and Muslim organizations and neighbourhoods.[5] Finally, Prime Minister V P Singh authorized the Chief Ministers of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar to stop the Ram *Rath yatra* and prevent the *kar seva* from being performed in Ayodhya. Paramilitary troops (especially Border Security Forces) were moved into Ayodhya where they clashed with *kar sevaks* (voluntary workers). This intensified the tension between the campaign supporters and central government. Advani, along with other leaders and activists of the party and the organization, was arrested in Bihar, under Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav's instruction, on 23 October. Immediately the BJP withdrew support from Singh's National Front coalition government and launched a nationwide strike for the next day. Violent agitation against Muslims spread on a pan-national scale, but especially in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka, where the BJP had built up strongholds.

Without explicitly mentioning the arrests, the video takes up the issue of governmental agency and fits it into a dramatic narrative of an unfinished revolutionary liberation struggle. This is when, towards the video's end, studio owner J K Jain appears on screen and addresses the audience with this appeal:

> This campaign is incomplete. This film, too, is incomplete. This movement is incomplete. But we believe that, with the grace of Sri Ram, this work will be done, the temple will be built, the journey will be completed and the film, too will be completed. *Come*, I invite you to join in this movement! Jai Ram [Victory to Ram].

With this 'patriotic pilgrimage' to reshape the nation-space, Advani and his party introduced a mode of political representation that became a significant part of the rhetoric of staging Hindutva ideology as a massive and powerful movement. Advani even projected it as a pilgrimage to draw the 'map of nationalism'.[6] The *yatra*, alongside other orchestrated means of mobilization, helped the BJP to grow into a major political player on India's political landscape, something that became evident in the results of the 1991 General Elections when the BJP (mainly due to its electoral success in Uttar Pradesh) got to delegate 54 Members of Parliament.[7]

From the Sea . . . demonstrates that the Ram *Rath Yatra* carried key ingredients of the Sangh Parivar's promotion of Hindutva as Hindu cultural nationalism. Particularly relevant were both the sanctification of nationalism and the politicization of devotion. Using events like the Ram *Rath Yatra*, BJP ideologues attempted to shape a new public 'think-space' in which Hindutva ideology could be imagined, displayed and consumed as a homogenous belief and value system that was professedly giving the nation a symbolic unity and identity. The rhetoric of patriotic pilgrimage shows that, in order to project itself as a 'party of civil consensus', the BJP drew heavily on popular culture, in particular,

religious imagery, narratives and practices. The conscious blurring of political and religious domains is reflected in this extract from an interview with then BJP president L K Advani:

> I hold that in India the religious appeal is very intense, *extremely* intense. It cuts across all caste and linguistic divisions. So, when we undertook this Rath yatra to affirm that this is a temple, this should be a temple, and that the whole country should contribute towards the construction of the temple . . . we tried to interpret it as a political campaign against pseudo-secularism. But there were *masses* who viewed it as a religious issue. And so there was a *massive* appeal.[8]

The main purpose of the videos was to rally Sangh Parivar members and Hindutva sympathizers behind the Ayodhya issue. Presenting the Ram *Rath yatra* as a victorious, crowd-pulling event, the videos were to support the BJP's effort to raise a 'counter-stage' on which the alleged weakness, failure and politics of misrepresentation of the current government could be staged vis-à-vis a homogenized Hindu people's voice.

The second video to be discussed in this chapter is entitled *Hail to Mother India—Unity Pilgrimage* (*Vande Mataram - Ekta Yatra*, Hindi; hereafter, *Unity Pilgrimage*) and was produced for the BJP in 1992 by Political Visions, a production house set up by Matthew S, a former employee of Jain Studios.[9] It documents another political pilgrimage undertaken by then party president Murli Manohar Joshi, a VHP hardliner, who became Minister of Human Resources Development when the BJP was in the government.[10] This pilgrimage ran from 11 December 1991 to 26 January 1992 (coinciding with Republic Day), and starting from the southern tip of India (Kanya Kumari), covering a distance of 15,000 km to Srinagar in Kashmir. The proclaimed aim of the pilgrimage was to hoist the Indian national flag over the main bazaar of Kashmir's provincial capital Srinagar in order to promote India's unity in the light of growing feelings of separatism and alienation among the Muslim majority in Kashmir from the politics conducted in India's capital Delhi. Joshi's *rath*, like Advani's chariot in 1990, was a converted van 'dressed up' as a Hindu temple (Figure 39). Like *From the Sea . . .*, *Unity Pilgrimage* was shown on mobile video vans at political events like election campaigns, it was presented on private television sets, at organized semi-public meetings of cadre groups within the Sangh Parivar and was sold in their paraphernalia shops.

This chapter proposes that both *From the Sea . . .* and *Unity Pilgrimage* can be understood as audiovisual 'living maps', to be internalized by the viewer in order to invoke in him or her feelings of devotional nationalism. They construct before the viewer's eyes a 'new' virtual cartography of India, based on an itinerary that employs patriotic sites as tools of orientation and order. Both video-



Figure 39 Murli Manohar Joshi's van made up as a temple, Karnataka. Still from *Unity Pilgrimage*.

pilgrimages aim at taking the viewer on a journey through time and space as layer upon layer, chains of visuals linked to cartographic threat or affirmation, are revealed as if they were a part of an archaeological excavation or a walk through a joyous theme park.

Both videos discussed here show that Hindutva maps are—with their link to a chain of 'historical maps' and spatial practices and their claim to represent Indianness—ideological constructs.[11] They underlie the Sangh Parivar's attempt to create a cult of the Hindutva nation-state and to enhance the BJP's power on the political stage. This implies the shaping of what Appadurai and Breckenridge have termed 'nationalist realism' when considering the various elements responsible for the shaping of a rhetoric of 'authentic' nationality.[12] Thus, there shall be a special focus on the 'careers' of related images, symbols and narratives in order to examine the context of their journeys and how and why they came to be linked to Hindutva nationalism.

Behind the seizure of territory as a key element of Hindutva nationality lay the notion that, through the act of pilgrimage and mapping, a lost or exiled but nevertheless essential aspect of Indianness could be magically revealed like a secret and sacred language to be understood by all members of this imagined 'moral community'. However, the rhetoric of national awakening and self-empowerment only camouflaged Hindutva representatives' intention to control people's ways of seeing and imagining along the symbolic routes, sites and borders on display on their virtual cartographies.

Following the argument that Hindutva cartographies are linked to an agenda to map and thus 'make home', this chapter divides into three sections, each discussing different spatial concepts manifest in the aforementioned *yatras*. In the first section, the cosmological, sacred and historical maps and spatial practices are explored with respect to the creation of *deshbhakti bhav* (mood of devotional nationalism). They enabled Hindutva ideologues to communicate their visions of a sacred national territory and of national identity as a highly territorial concept. The videos document the fact that several cartographic models have been appropriated in order to enhance in the viewer feelings of intimate closeness and bonding between society and territory. Thus, notions of home and homelessness come to figure as important metaphors enhancing the process of identification. Firstly, there is the notion of sacred land as it evolved within the ritual of religious pilgrimage and cosmological maps. Secondly, there is a range of scientific maps and picturesque landscapes deriving from colonial activities in India. Thirdly, there is the drawing of Hindutva 'counter-maps' in response to those cartographies and sites of importance projected by post-colonial governments. I argue that Hindutva maps and spatial concepts are a result of, reaction to, and in part a fusion of these three spatial concepts.

The second section of this chapter considers that mental maps and spatial strategies also came to bear relevance for mobilization and education at the level of collective memory or 'mental mapping'. The third and last section considers the processes of personification of territory as a gendered body. The key icon in this context is Mother India. She came to be employed in Hindutva rhetoric as both an object of collective desire for familial security and fraternity, and a projection screen for what Sankaran Krishna (1996) has termed 'cartographic anxiety', that is, the fear of invasion and fragmentation both of the geobody[13] and the social organism through metaphors of dismemberment and betrayal.

The spatial politics of 'home' and 'homelessness'

> *Heimat* is an ominous utopia. Whether 'home' is imagined as the community . . . of the nation state or of the region, it is steeped in the longing for wholeness, unity, integrity. It is about community centred around shared traditions and memories . . . Heimat is a mythical bond rooted in a lost past, a past that has already disintegrated . . . Identity is a question of memory, and memories of 'home' in particular.[14]

Both patriotic *yatra* and video technology created an imaginary space in which the Sangh Parivar's projection of the Hindus as a moral community could be mapped into 'virtual existence'. The members of this desired community could

not be placed in an empty space. They required a 'homeland', sites for the projection of desires and fears, as well as spatial models from which social practice could evolve. The key question discussed throughout this chapter has occupied countless political representatives engaged in mobilizing strategies with regard to national/territorial sovereignty before: 'How can we create reverence for a map?'

This enquiry, and therefore part of my argument, requires a discussion on the question 'How can we create a home in which we can safely and happily dwell?' Hindutva ideologues referred the notion of nationality to two factors, both of which were linked to ideas of social space and geographic territory: 'home' (*Heimat*) and 'homelessness' (Exile). In this context, Lord Ram and Mother India emerged as key figures of *deshbhakti,* or nationalist devotion, as on this cover of an audio cassette of songs recorded for the Ramjanmabhoomi movement (Figure 40). They enabled Hindutva representatives to 'narrate home into being' and to create a hierarchical space in which they could position themselves as legitimate leaders (Figure 41). The role of the BJP *yatras* and the videos about them were to enhance these notions by creating a cleavage that positioned the Hindus on the side of the 'homeless' to evoke in the audiences a desire to re-map India and to reinstall themselves 'at home'.



Figure 40 Cover of an audio-cassette with devotional songs related to the Ramjanmabhoomi Movement, displaying Bharat Mata und Ram. Designed and compiled by Satyanarayan Maurya, 1990s. Private collection.



Figure 41 Narendra Modi and BJP leader M M Joshi at a public meeting during the Unity Pilgrimage. Still from *Unity Pilgrimage*. . .

Video's commodification of 'home'

As an essential part of cultural practice in India, the concept of pilgrimage served the Hindutva spokespeople's attempt to popularize ideology extremely well, because the spatial practices of the BJP, as implicit in the *yatras*, appealed to the familiarity of a large majority of Indians with pilgrimage and the sacredness of territory. Pilgrimage and pilgrimage maps are spatial concepts that allow for the visualization and constitution of socialization processes by evoking and appealing to ideas of community. The meaning of *yatra* is actually 'journey', but the term is generally associated with the journey to a holy place undertaken by the *yatri* (traveller).[15] As a pilgrimage space, India can be imagined as a body covered by a complex network of routes and sites each linked and referring to one another through pilgrimage practices. Temples are sites of community and identity formation too, for, to some extent, social rights and duties are traditionally negotiated and distributed via the temple. Likewise, the act of undertaking and imagining pilgrimage has helped political and/or religious agents to constitute temporary communities and feelings of solidarity within them. Pilgrimage also mirrors territorial transformations of the nation-state, reflecting decisions and actions taking place on local, regional or pan-national levels and between civil society and state by being acted out within this performative landscape.

There is a very practical purpose behind the 'spatial journeys' offered in the videos. Both the actual *yatra* and the *yatra* videos were used for the purpose of

appealing to voters by paralleling or proceeding elections. What is new about the pilgrimage maps as they are dramatized in the videos discussed here is that they seem to transcend caste and class borders for the purpose of drawing upon the notion of an imagined oneness of citizens as a fraternity of pilgrims. While such intra-communal borders were sought to be transcended, other spatial concepts and strategies emphasized acts of border-drawing to polarize 'primordial insiders' [Hindus] and 'outsiders' [Muslims], dwellers and nomads, home and the world.

The BJP, and even earlier, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), have turned the concept of pilgrimage upside down. Instead of asking the citizens of India to go on a pilgrimage, they did it themselves by inventing 'new' pilgrimage routes, sites and reasons for going on a pilgrimage, and merging them with already established routes and sites. This form of politicized and pedagogical pilgrimage remains an artificial, ideological device since it has not sunk into everyday life. Patriotic pilgrimages are not performed by citizens, unless to a tourist site of national relevance, like the Red Fort or Indira Gandhi Memorial in Delhi.

Packaged as a spectacle and staged as an event of national interest, the 'persuasiveness' of the pilgrimage videos invited the individual citizen to internalize and experience a whole set of familiar symbols with narratives which defined the pilgrimage as a relevant item for the creation of the nation-as-home and the nation-people as its legitimate dwellers.

The desire of the homeless

In line with the RSS and the VHP, the BJP proposed that through inadequate secular governance the Hindus had been transformed into a homeless people in their own country. A change in politics, so ran the conclusion, was required in order to re-establish the Hindu people as the 'true' inhabitants of the land. In videos such as *From the Sea . . .* or *Unity Pilgrimage*, pilgrimage came to be projected as a tool for changing both society and government politics. The footage of a speech by Advani in *From the Sea . . .* shows him declaring that:

> This is a question of Hindu faith. It is considered that in Hindusthan every people's feelings should be taken into consideration and be respected. But not those of the Hindus. Hindu politicians humiliate Hindus. This is the meaning of their secularism. How to humiliate Hindus—this is their interest. This distorted secularism, let us destroy it forever!

Both videos appeal to and invoke fears of homelessness, closely associated with 'alien pseudo-secularism'. They do so by creating a shared memory of

invasions, wars and battles that are entwined with cartographic metaphors such as 'homeland'. These threats are said to have been endured for centuries and continue due to governmental ignorance and practices of misrepresentation. Besides colonization and secularism, westernization is also seen as endangering the alleged traditional unity of the organism of Hindu society through egocentrism and capitalism, and is said to have further alienated the Hindus from their cultural and spiritual home, their own 'roots'.

The desires for national unity and for an object of devotion, appearing close but out of reach (e.g. Mother India), as came to be projected and enhanced by Hindutva ideologues' is a modern phenomenon. It mirrors the Hindutva ideologues' search for an 'alternative modernity' rather than attempt to 'return' to pre-Mughal times. Yet, it also demonstrates the BJP's commodification of nationalist ideology to appeal to members of the urban Hindu middle classes. In the early 1990s, members of the middle classes seemed receptive to the persuasive talk about Hindutva as a superior cultural and socio-political model ready-made for consumption. 'Homelessness' and 'displacement' corresponded well to the disadvantages felt on the economic level. The anchoring of Hindutva ideology around the concept of the joint family as safe haven and storage of traditional practices and values was particularly alluring to those members of Indian civil society as a 'think-space'. The videos show that Hindutva rhetoric provided those segments of society with a whole chain of metaphors and images that associate familial security, warmth, and solidarity with the projected national brotherhood. The identification of nation with family has moved onto centre-stage as a model image for processes of collective identification: family equals home equals nation.[16] This chapter proposes that the metaphor of the nation-as-joint family should be understood in the context of changes and challenges occurring in the process and experience of modernity. In such a context, as sociologist Veena Das points out, an imaginary space, an 'idea of a spatially bound, face-to-face sphere of human relationships based upon an innate moral order'[17] is created as an opposition to the shift in primary loyalties and the anonymity of relationships allegedly befalling modern societies. Thus, one could argue, Hindutva was involved in what Das further elaborates as a, 'nostalgic construction which uses ideas on the traditional community as a resource for building an alternative vision of . . . modernity'.[18]

By associating himself with Lord Ram, L K Advani consciously drew upon the power of the Ram *Rath yatra* as a mythic image of the god-king's return from exile to his hometown Ayodhya as it features in the mythological epic *Ramayana*.[19] In *From the Sea . . .* L K Advani is presented as just such a charismatic or even messianic saviour who leads the people towards their destiny, their 'home', no matter what kind of battles, difficulties and dangers have to be faced. Connected to the notion of homelessness, and used for

emotive mobilization in this context, is the re-portrayal of defeats, humiliations and losses. To understand the rhetoric of charismatic leadership and collective displacement and alienation, it is useful to consider Michael Walzer's book *Exodus and Revolution* (1988) where the historian defines exodus as a 'great narrative inscribed in the consciousness of the west in which events and ideas can be framed, embedded and comprehended', adding that '(f)or every liberation there is an Egypt'.[20] A people like the Jews depended on the shared memory of the Egyptian diaspora, coupled with their experience of the alienation felt today, through war, pain, fragmentation, and of yet being the 'chosen', the 'real' people. Exodus could also be linked to such a community's longing for the epiphany of a messianic leader who would recognise and translate people's fears into hope, pain into anger, by providing them with a destination and a purpose. We can find parallels for this 'wish-image' of a people in exodus in many Jain Studios videos where the Hindus are referred to as 'refugees in their own country', an idea that becomes particularly relevant in the context of Kashmir as reflected in the second video discussed further below.

Fusing cosmologies, cartographies and counter-maps

Where does the notion of the sacredness of territory come from, and why and how has it been linked to the ritual of pilgrimage in Hindu nationalism? A discussion of nationhood with respect to Hindutva's mapping practices in videos requires further analysis of the kinds of spatial concepts employed. Different notions feed into the idea of *deshbhakti* as the key idea of nationality. The roots of Hindutva's spatial concepts are manifold; there is the fusion of cosmological diagrams and mythological maps; the tools of colonial power and nostalgia and finally both a rejection and adaptation of previous postcolonial mapping strategies.

Sacred maps

The title *From the Sea . . .* is a conscious reference to the sea (*sagar*) and the sacred river Saryu that flows through Ayodhya. Using the narrative thread of Advani's journey from the open sea to the riverbanks of the holy town allows the video narrative to draw an imaginary line connecting these two sites and to invest the journey itself with the purpose and meaningful action. The video begins with documentary footage of a golden sunset over a river, and shows pilgrims bathing in its waters (Figure 42). A few moments later, a montage scene displays, among other footage, shots of the map of India, while the voice-over commentary narrates that 'by Ram's grace, this part of the world . . .



Figure 42 Sunset at the river Saryu in Ayodhya. Still from *GMH.*

was enlightened by sacred knowledge'. In the course of the video, there are also shots of wild rivers surging from their sources in the Himalayan mountains, and the sun setting on the Indian ocean, again in montage.

Images of the setting sun, bathing pilgrims, rivers and mountains, are firmly established elements of Jain Studios videos' iconography, as much as the map of India and voice-over references to the sacredness of the land appear repeatedly. They are a integral to the attempt to translate national sentiment into territorial devotion. In pilgrimage, water and in particular, rivers, have a distinctive meaning. Like mountains or temples, they form an important element in the vocabulary and cartography of Hindu cosmology in that they are generally associated with the embodiment and/or epiphany of gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon on earth. A Sangh Parivar book cover depicts Mother India leading a stream of religious and national leaders as well as chariots through a sacred landscape of divine mountains (Figure 43).[21] Sites like the sea (*sagar*), a river (Saryu) or another sacred being are parts of the stage-set of nature presented as a living mythological landscape, loaded with stories from Hindu myths as they 'take place' (Figure 44).[22] Pilgrimage videos such as *From the Sea . . .* utilize their Hindu audiences' assumed subconscious familiarity with the fact that in pilgrimage sacred and profane maps overlap, and are tied to each other in many meaningful ways.[23]

Within the cartography of sites, pilgrims bathing in the river Saryu in Ayodhya come to feature as key images in *From the Sea . . . .* It can be argued that this is because they embody ideal-typical models of agency, to be followed by

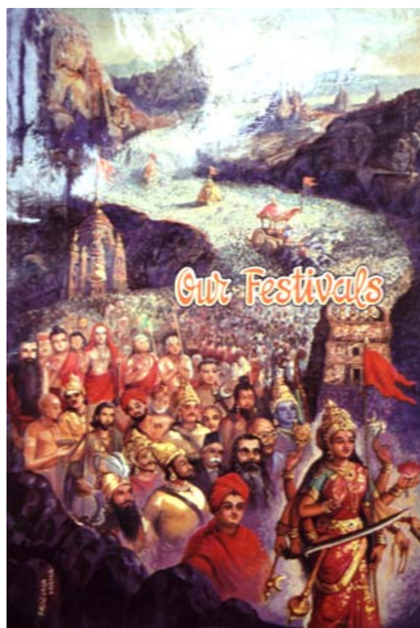


Figure 43 Mother India leading a procession through India's sacred landscape. Bookcover from *Our Festivals* (Seshadri 1983), Private Collection.



Figure 44 The cow as an abode of the Gods and Goddesses. Cover of Sangh Parivar pamphlet entitled *Cow. Nation's Mother*. Designed by Satyanarayan Maurya. 1990s. Private collection.

the viewers. Such a depiction of Indians standardized as devotees also reflects a strategy of social bonding and mobilization, and an identification of sacred with political landscapes for the purpose of nationalist rhetoric. K C Sudarshan, then senior leader of the RSS, explained when commenting on the appeal of the VHP's *Ektamata Yagna* of 1983[24] to the 'Hindu sentiment':

> When people were told that 'Ganga Mata' [Goddess of the river Ganges] is coming, Mother Ganga is coming, *thousands* of people came there. It was a thing to be *seen* to be *believed!!* . . . Even in Kerala, which at the time was under the leftist ideology. . . . There also, *thousands* of people flocked together to have a *darshan* of the Ganga Mata. And even if they could get a few drops on their body, they thought, 'we shall definitely go to heaven'. That sort of sentiment is there . . . All these things evoke a nationalist sentiment in the people (Figures 45, 46). [25]

Since ritual bathing is a form of worship performed by all Hindus alike, it came to serve the Sangh Parivar's interest to project the Hindus as a united brotherhood, as 'one caste' of nation-devotees. Explicitly, the appeal to the transcendence of social borders through (Hindutva) pilgrimage is also evident in *From the Sea . . .*'s footage of speeches that refer to, as well as images of *adivasi*



Figure 45 Ganga Mata, Gau (Cow) Mata, card of *Ekatmata Yagna*, a pan-Indian (including Hindu kingdom of Nepal) pilgrimage led by the VHP in 1983. Private Collection.

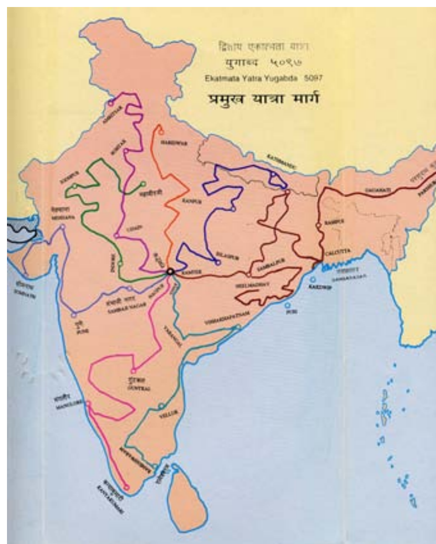


Figure 46 Map of the itinerary of the *Ekatmata Yagna*. Ibid.

people supporting and celebrating, the Ram *Rath yatra*. Such direct references are obvious in the video footage of a public speech by Advani, who states:

> Other politicians, they want to divide the country. But the BJP will take on a programme in the name of Ram which can bring the country together. And I appeal to the entire population: Rise above all your differences and support the Ram temple movement. Let us say: Jay (Victory to) Somnath! Hail to Ayodhya!

In their devotion to the sacred territory, all people are staged as equal and part of one and the same Hindu mainstream, like a politicized *vastu purusha* (Cosmic man).[26]

From the Sea . . . shows the itinerary of L K Advani as he journeys through the country. The employment of a chariot (*rath*) is not coincidental and serves as a 'link-image' that connects the divine and the mythic within the sphere of politics by means of territory. On the one hand, it refers attention to the *Mahabharat*, the Hindu epic in which the noble warrior Arjun, accompanied by Lord Krishna, rides a chariot into the battle against his enemy-cousins (see Chapter 6) (Figure 47).[27] On the other hand, the chariot enables association with religious festivals and pilgrimage processions during which deities are said to leave their divine kingdoms to pay a visit to the earth and to make



Figure 47 Arjun, accompanied by Lord Krishna, riding the chariot into battle against the Pandavas. Still from *Unity Pilgrimage*.

themselves and their laws manifest. Catching a glimpse of the gods while they are on such a journey through the countryside is meant to be an event of particular religious significance for every worshipper. The participation in such a festive act is itself defined as a sacred and blessed experience (*darshan lena*). These references clearly play upon the procession's potential to create charismatic leadership and legitimize political authority. By means of the Ram *rath yatra*, Advani strove to increase his and his party's authority, consciously adapting elements from popular mythology and religious Hindu thought and practices.

Connecting all of the stops of Advani's journey, but particularly the two sites of Somnath and Ayodhya, the video draws a mental map in the mind of the viewer that also finds reflection in popular pilgrimage maps and the practice of ritual circumambulation (*pradakshina*), that is, the understanding of the pilgrim's movement as part of the act of worship. Territory now becomes significant for the meaning of sites visited along the pilgrimage route, for example, in the case of the four sacred sites (*dhams*) of Badrinath, Jaganath, Rameshwaram and Dwarka.[28] Several informants during my fieldwork related this pan-Indian concept of pilgrimage to the 'fact' that the Hindu nation had existed since ancient times (Figure 48). Each of the places, as well as their

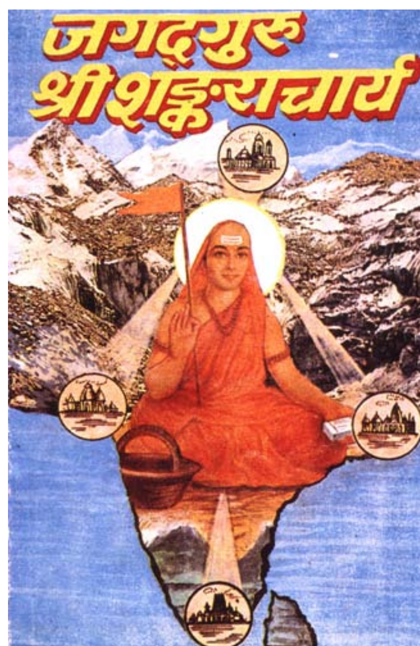


Figure 48 First Shankaracharya seated on a map of India, marking the four *dhams*. Cover of a Sangh Parivar pamphlet (Upadhyaya 1996). Private collection.

connectedness, according to the video narrative, has a story to tell and is intertwined with a larger narrative. The role of such a complex web of significant sites for the constitution of nationalist rhetoric has already been recognised by Veer D Savarkar as regards the struggle for national independence from colonial rule. Developing a prototype of an extremist territorial nationalism[29] in *Hindutva. Who is a Hindu?* (1923), Savarkar refers to the land of Hindus as both the playground of gods and graveyard for mundane heroic martyrs when he writes:

> Ah! Every hill and dell is instinct with memories . . . Here the divine Cowherd [Lord Krishna] played on his flute . . . Here the son of Bandabahadur was hacked to pieces before the eyes of his father . . . Every stone here has a story of martyrdom to tell! Every inch of thy soil, O Mother! has been a sacrificial ground![30]

In this quote, religious and national devotion are linked by the highest ideal of selflessness through martyrdom for the nation (see Chapter 6). But Savarkar's comment is also reminiscent of the myth of the dismemberment of goddess Sati's dead corpse. Here, the places where limbs of Sati's body fell are said to have become *shakti-pithas* (holy seats or resorts of the goddess in which she is said to be both reunited with her husband Siva and can be approached by devotees).[31] The play upon this Hindu myth does not only involve a gendering of landscape and divine action but a certain degree of eroticism that relates the two in a deeply romantic love story (see below). Savarkar's citation further relates to the importance of collective remembrance through worship of the earth.

The idea that India's sacredness is a mosaic of sites of which every single one has a story to tell, and thus becomes integrated in a living stage-set for the dramatic events of mythology and history, is vital to the understanding of the narrative of the pilgrimage videos. This is even more the case when it comes to the videos' seemingly arbitrary or eclectic accumulation of sacred sites and references to different places and moments in colonial history.

Mapping Hindutva vis-à-vis colonial history

The fusion of national identity with territorial claims was intertwined with the process of modern nation-building and colonialism.[32] The development of the modern nation-state and capitalism, with colonial enterprise as one of its products, were linked with two apparently juxtaposed forms of engagement and cultural production: the romantic and the scientific gaze.[33] Both forms of seeing and perceiving the subject and the world were, as we shall see, elements of the same discourse of power that sought to imagine and enforce control

over India by means of artistic and scientific engagement. Both were parts of and enhanced specific aesthetic techniques and technologies that were to present and commodify the (colonized) world to the members of the colonizing world. While the romantic gaze tended to predominantly rest on images that decorated walls of colonial libraries, mansions and offices, the scientific gaze impacted on administrative, educational and overtly propagandistic iconographies. Yet these two apparently distinct domains must be understood as impacting upon each other, to the extent of crossing borders.

Panoramic visions of Arcadia

The use of footage of the sun setting over the Indian ocean, of wild rivers in Himalayan mountains, of pilgrims bathing in golden streams of water, and of views of the town-scape of Ayodhya in *From the Sea . . .* is already mentioned in the above section on sacred maps. These images were part of a vocabulary in which landscape came to play a major role as an icon of nationalist desire. This iconography of sights of nature came to shape an important facet of territorial nationality in Hindutva rhetoric because of its links to nostalgic and romanticized visions of an Indian Arcadia or a Hindu Golden Age (Figure 49).

However, the lineage of this poetic and romanticist iconography has its origins in Europe and found entry into Indian nationalist rhetoric through the British engagement in trade with, and later the colonization of, India.[34]



Figure 49 Picturesque view of Ayodhya. From *GMH.*

The notion of territory played a major role in the panoramic displays of colonial rhetoric and what Pinney has termed as 'colonial perspectivalism', that is the employment of aesthetic techniques for the purpose of control[35] (Chapter 3). The 'picturesque gaze'[36] of agents involved in the colonizing process was, in Edney's words, 'a perfect intellectual tool for imagining the landscapes of South Asia'.[37] Along with the bureaucrats, advocates, traders and soldiers from Great Britain, came painters who began to portray a picturesque India in the style of Dutch, Italian and English Landscape schools. Paintings, aquatints and watercolour drawings of temples, palaces, fortresses, and the peaceful rivers and mountains of India shaped a romanticized image of the country which was ready-made not only for the consumption of British citizens in the Empire,[38] but also for the nationalists who used these stereotypical views to praise the beauty of their land, while possibly unaware of the strong Orientalist agenda inherent in this 'modular nationalism/realism'.

I argue that Hindutva's internalization of the romantic, or picturesque gaze ought to be understood as integral to what I have termed 'internalized Orientalism' in the previous chapter.[39] In the videos, this pastoralism of Arcadian settings, seemingly untouched by human hand, plays an important role in the videos' vocabulary, in which dreamscape shots of the snow-clad Himalayas, lakes, the sea and rivers come to form a lyrical counter-map—very much like the above-mentioned poem about Mother India—to the austere appearance of the purely geographical delineation of borders, and where songs and voice-over commentary praise the beauty of the country as an essential fetish of nationalist devotion. Yet Hindutva's 'internalized Orientalism' was not limited to a strong fascination with the poetics of landscapes and such. The romantic and the scientific gaze merged in the 'wish-image' of the map of India as a signifier of nationalist passion and power.

Re-mapping scientific colonialism

Time and again, in a video like *From the Sea . . .* we find shots of modern maps of India. They are displayed alongside picturesque shots of the Himalayas or footage of the Hindu flag and/or the BJP flag or posters of Ram. Furthermore, they are superimposed as logos on important historical events, portraits of national heroes, depictions of 'the people', and architectural sites and idyllic landscapes of India (Figure 50, see also Figure 43).[40] The use of scientific modern maps in *From the Sea . . .* helps us locate the Sangh Parivar's understanding of national sovereignty via territorial identity, and also informs us about the ambiguous relationship of Hindutva vis-a-vis India's colonial past. The historic footage of British rulers used in many of Jain Studios' videos displays them as violent oppressors, as representatives of a powerful machinery



Figure 50 Picturesque view of Himalayan mountains in Kashmir. Still from *Hamlavar Khabadhar Hindusthan Hai Taiyar.*

which was out to tame and humiliate its colonized subjects. At the same time, the British rulers are acknowledged as having imported elaborate systems of administration, transport and communication to India. What is not stated, however, is the recognition that with census and administration politics, and modern scientific cartography, colonialism had also introduced new techniques of control and surveillance. The tools that enabled the former rulers to enforce power upon their subjects were now appropriated and altered by the Sangh Parivar. It is here, in the symbolical act of claiming the power to map the nation's identity with the tool-kit of its former rulers, that the modern map of India finds entry into the visual vocabulary of Hindutva/Indianness, through identification of nationality with territory.

With their modern mapping practices, British colonialists introduced the notion of territory as a political and abstract entity. The first map of 'Hindoostan', drawn by the Surveyor-General of Bengal, James Rennell, was published in 1782.[41] According to Matthew Edney, this 'provided the definitive image of India for the British and European public',[42] but also for Indian nationalists of various kinds. For the first time, India could be gazed upon and conceptualized as single, self-referential geographical unit. Colonial rhetoric also referred to an identification of the British Empire with the land of Hindus as well as the territory of the Mughal Empire.[43] However, it seems as if a distinction was made between the first as the basis for a cultural unity that embraced Afghanistan in the West and reached out as far as Singapore in the East, and the latter as model for political authority.

The representatives of the independence movement, who merged their claim for national sovereignty with the borders outlined by the colonial rulers, enhanced the importance of territorial integrity as part of national sovereignty. In the 1920s the Indian National Congress lay open its claims to national independence on the basis of an Indian state and territory.[44] To subvert the colonialists' symbolic monopoly over the maps they drew, Hindutva ideologues like Veer Savarkar stated that the territorial borders of India were not new achievements. On the contrary, they had been the outcome of ancient cultural borders that signified the 'primordial' unity and national legitimacy of the Hindu people. Savarkar outlined classifications and a history of Indianness, personifying territorial identity as primordial through notions such as 'fatherland' (*pitrabhoomi)* and 'sacred land' (*punyabhoomi*):

> A Hindu means a person who regards his land of BHARATVARSHA [India], from the Indus to the Seas as his Fatherland, as well as his Holy-Land that is the cradle of his religion.[45]

These categories were then supported by a whole range of idealized forms of devotion through which the nation should be worshipped as *dharma-, karma-, matri-, deva-* and *mokshabhoomi*, that is, as the ordering principles of morale, destiny, motherhood, godliness and salvation respectively.[46] Like the artist of a historical painting, Savarkar presented the ancient past in the romanticist light present in so many visions and articulations of nationalist utopias as the 'primordial' destinies of a people. Savarkar and others concurred with the colonial cartography of Greater India (*Akhand Bharat,* with borders from Afghanistan to Singapore) by identifying it with the borders of an ancient Indian Empire, or Hindu *Rashtra*. The same internalization of Western models of the nation-state can be traced in the essentialization of notions of territorial nationalism through metaphors like mother- or fatherland. This will be discussed in more detail further below.

The maps of the colonial rulers were power apparatuses in that they also aimed at transforming the Indian subcontinent into a rigid cage of surveillance by means of classification (e.g., caste, religion, region, language). A silenced people could thereby be pushed to the periphery of colonial political agency and used for the purpose of affirming the alleged Western superiority, as well as the manifold economic interests of the British Empire in India. Risley's map of India of 1915, for example, reflects the interest in classifying and commodifying the Indian people as regional 'types'.[47]

In videos like *From the Sea . . .*, several references are made to the territorial changes that both traumatized and liberated the subcontinent in 1947. With Partition, a 'border of blood' was drawn and was followed by one of the largest mass migrations in human history.[48] *From the Sea . . .* carries shots of Partition,

of burning houses and mutilated people, of trains packed with refugees, while many booklets and other visual Hindutva propaganda portray colonial rule as an era that left India lying on a devastated battlefield. The Sangh Parivar frequently refers back to Partition in order to increase in their present and potential sympathizers the feeling of a loss of territory and national identity. Second RSS leader, Golwalkar, allegorizes the threat of geographical fragmentation as dismemberment of the national body thus:

> The tearing away of the limbs of our mother and the gory bloodbath of millions and millions of our kith and kin is the price that we have paid for that ignoble attitude . . . Do all these memories burn in our veins? . . . Let us remember that this oneness is ingrained in our blood from our very birth, because we are all born as Hindus.[49]

Indeed, for many members of the RSS or VHP who I talked to during fieldwork, Partition was another result of political and religious leaders' weakness and impotency, and a humiliation for those Hindus who perceived the united India as *their* land. A group within the Sangh Parivar today has dedicated their work to the reunification of *Akhand Bharat* through rejecting the legitimacy of Partition. On the basis of alleged cultural unity, their representatives state that even Afghanistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Burma should be re-integrated into the Indian Empire.

Partition, so went the argument raised by many representatives of the Sangh Parivar, only invited further hatred between Hindus and Muslims, and increased the danger of 'balkanization'. But these arguments are based on stereotypical views of alleged essential ethnic differences, and so their apparently concerned perspective is but an affirmation of cultural difference in favour of a particular social group, that is, the Hindu people. This finds reflection in the following excerpt from an interview with Premchand Jain (PJ), a senior RSS worker and VHP activist responsible for the cow protection agitation in the 1990s:

> CB: So in the very early times India was one?
>
> PJ: It was one. Actually the Britishers propagated wrongly that *they* made India one. India was one when the Britishers were not even there. When *they* didn't know how to wear clothes, *they* didn't know how to build houses, *India* (was there). But because we didn't have unity, therefore those people were able to rule over us . . . *Ahimsa* [the concept of non-violence, reinterpreted by Mohandas K. Gandhi in the context of the freedom struggle]—that is important for all of Hindus . . . But that Hindus should continue to be beaten—*that* we don't tolerate!
>
> CB: Beaten by whom?

> PJ: For example Muslims here, they are not peaceful people. And even the Christians: if they are the majority, they also do all sorts of things in this country. If Hindus are united then they can do anything. This country has been divided and we have become weak. Only because of disunity, of non-unity . . . India's history is very long. Now, the Britishers they tried to propagate wrong history before all the people. Our history is very long. Actually there were so many invasions from the West. Afghans, Mughals, Pusthans, so many people came from there. And because of non-unity in this country they were able to manage us. Otherwise they were not better fighters or they were not in any ways superior to us. But because of non-unity the whole problem arose.[50]

What we find here is a fragmentation of two pasts in the mental maps that locate Indianness in a pre-Mughal utopia of cosmological maps and paradisical landscapes, versus a Mughal, colonial, and post-colonial, hell. The *yatras* and spatial concepts documented in the videos have to be understood in this context of an emerging 'counter-map' of Indianness that is intended to remove the left-overs of foreign rule from the mental maps allegedly inscribed in the collective memory of the people. The attempt was thus to transform India from what Kritzman refers to as 'dominated site' to 'dominant site', that is from a space linked to dark and painful memories of humiliations, riots or massacres, to that connected to the celebration of a group's identity.[51]

But even these new, imagined maps work in 'almost the same, but not quite'[52] the way as their predecessors, that is, as instruments of another ideological apparatus that enforces control by classifying, orientalizing and implying violence for its acts of border drawing. With these identity maps, the subject seems to almost naturally call for the construction of and juxtaposition with an 'Other'. Manifest in the rhetoric of a video like *From the Sea . . .* are strategies of internalized Orientalism, or the appropriation of colonial stereotypes for the purpose of self-constitution. The process of re-mapping and re-claiming both 'lost' land and identity by transforming the power of the internalized colonial machinery (almost as in an act of shamanism), could be described as, what Homi Bhabha calls, a subversive 'gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power'.[53] Rather than deconstructing and overcoming colonial stereotypes, Hindutva's 'counter-maps' affirm them through acts of camouflage. Taking the liberty to substitute the term capitalism with that of Hindutva on the basis of arguing that Hindutva, very generally speaking, is an ideology and discoursive practice, too, I close this section with a quote by Robert Young:

> [Hindutva] as a territorial writing machine . . . describes rather exactly the violent physical and ideological procedures of colonization, deculturation and acculturation, by which the territory and cultural space of an indigenous society must be disrupted, dissolved and then reinscribed according to the needs of the apparatus of the occupying power.[54]

The idea that mapping processes are a part of ongoing identification and reinterpretation leads us to the discussion of Hindutva's reinterpretation of post-colonial mapping practices as a process of reinscribing national identity.

'My India is great': cartographies of India after Independence[55]

The last category of maps that impact upon the territorial definition of Hindutva nationality, are those which evolved after Independence. When the British left India the country was in both a state of enthusiasm in regard to its newly-gained national independence, and one of turmoil in terms of its administration, economy, politics and social fabric due to Partition. Rising from the site of colonial collapse, the new leaders suggested, the phoenix-like development of the young nation-state would bring about elevation in the form of socialism, secularism, planned industrialization and mass education of the citizens. To engender identification with the young nation-state, territorial boundaries and sites had to be both secured and filled with prospects of development. The nation-space projected by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru was not based on sacred cosmologies or colonial geographies, but on maps that related India to economic and technological development. The Indian nation was imagined into being as a community of producers dedicated fully to the task of nation building, attached to the welfare of the state. Sunil Khilnani remarks that 'India in the 1950s fell in love with the idea of concrete'[56] for industrialization was said to have brought wealth and stability to countries in the West, and India wanted to follow. To wipe out the memories of communal disharmony that accompanied the freedom struggle and particularly Partition, religious sites figured only at the periphery, as silent reminders of a past. Instead, steel plants, canals and dams became the 'futurist temples' of the nation. Their straight lines were to frame and regulate the citizen's agency. In such a model, the people were expected to separate their personal religious devotion from their public duties, to be a nation of secularized producers rather than a nation of devotees. Most of all it was the propaganda films churned out by Films Division, part of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, that were to establish a new mental map in the consciousness of the citizenry. Cinema halls were obliged to show a Films Division production before the start of every film. With films like *End of a Mirage* (1963) on an irrigation canal in the desert area of Rajasthan, *Project for Plenty* (1953) presenting the Hirakund dam project, or *Earth and Water* (1956), featuring another river project in the Nilgiri Hills, the state projected the 'saga of man and machine'.[57]

From 1959 onwards, the television network Doordarshan increasingly took over this task. The Nehruvian map of India was followed by Indira Gandhi's version of a paternalistic centralized state versus an allegedly immature civil

society. Since 1977, Congress(I) increasingly built upon fears of India's 'balkanization'.[58] Indira Gandhi's reign after her comeback in 1980 was marked by a shift in political representation: the Indian nation-state was projected as an integrating and uniting force based on mainstream Hindu culture. After Indira Gandhi's assassination in 1984, her son Rajiv expanded the cartography of Hinduism as integrating device. A series of television spots titled *Mera Bharat Mahan* ('My India is great') were broadcast on state television in the late 1980s, drawing a map of India filled with images of beautiful landscape and happy people, with a key prominent figure, such as a cricket player from the national team, saying the 'mantra' of 'My India is great' at the end of every spot.[59] Rajiv Gandhi's vision of India was a mixture of admiration for his mother's iron hand and his own vision of a Hindu middle-class potpourri enjoying consumption in the age of economic liberalization. The map of India was thus turned into an eclectic, ethnic and colourful folk site of consumerist festivity and fetishes of national heritage, like a 'tourist map' filled with beautiful sites and spectacular events.

Hindutva's counter-maps

One montage in *From the Sea . . .* contains these shots: out of cosmic darkness emerges an animated revolving globe. It moves towards the camera, then stops allowing the camera to take a close-up shot of India. This India is a map of Akhand Bharat, signified not only by shape but by an 'inner glow', a shining star from within that beams like gold reflected in the sun, illuminating the land that is said to have existed even before the rest of the world was created. The voice-over commentary links both the sites of the title by stating that:

> . . . the Somnath temple is one of the most sacred spaces and battlefield of India's independence struggle, the arena of Sadar Vallabhai Patel's struggles. We bow to the sacred spot. Hundreds of salutations to Somnath! This rath of Ram on a ten thousand kilometre journey will reach Ayodhya, the birthplace of Ram. Many salutations to Ayodhya!

From the Sea . . . reintroduces religious sites into the cartography of the nation, but does so with the spirit of Rajiv Gandhi's 'heritage maps' and colonialism's attraction with the picturesque and folkloristic. A new 'counter-map' emerged with Hindutva's agenda to re-map the nation, reinvest religious traditions and practices with nationalist meaning, and suggest memories of pre-colonial history in the light of the nation-state and modernity.

In comparison, these two sites seemed ideal for outlining Sangh Parivar, in particular BJP spokespeople's attempts to negotiate 'their' version of nationality. To understand the relevance of the BJP's claim to put India's

allegedly lost glory back on the map by re-establishing her sacred sites, we have to travel back to the early years of Independence once more. Nehru's priorities in setting India on the 'right track' were industrial growth and education. However, he did compromise with regard to the demands in the 1950s of his Home Minister Sadar Vallabhai Patel and other politicians to reconstruct the Krishna temple in Somnath.[60] Against Nehru's visions of India's development as industrialized nation, Patel wanted to realise his own visions of an 'ancient' and 'eternal' India, with an emphasis on the interests of the so-called 'Hindu majority'. In the eyes of many RSS activists, Nehru's bending to Patel's conservatism set an ideal example of a secularism that finally recognized religion's relevance, particularly that of the Hindus.[61] This example illustrates where democracy can be transformed into plain majoritarianism. It is in this light that *From the Sea . . .* presents the BJP's claim that the current government should submit to the re-mapping politics of Hindutva when it comes to the reconstruction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya. The voice-over commentary, accompanied by a march-like tune and a poster of the proposed Ram temple in Ayodhya, narrates:

> L K Advani has to fulfil his pledge which he has kept in the election manifesto. That pledge was the promise to build the Ram mandir [temple]. That is why the BJP expresses this devotion to Saryu . . . Just as Vallabhai Patel, the former Home Minister who restored the ancient Somnath temple to its former glory to protect and consolidate the country's freedom, so will L K Advani, by constructing the temple at Ramjanmabhoomi, restore India's lost pride . . . In this holy land of Shiva, Ram's traditions will be fulfilled again. Bharat Mata ki Jai (Victory to Mother India)!

The video presents Advani as a leader following in the footsteps of Patel. The metaphor of Ram's exile mentioned above combines various associations of 'coming home' and aligns Advani's charismatic leadership to a mass movement with a clear direction, justification and purpose. What the spatial practices of Hindutva attempt and succeed to do is provide a concept in the shape of a world-making text, in Rob Shield's words, 'an intellectual shorthand whereby spatial metaphors and place images can convey a complex set of associations'.[62] Where Somnath came to represent the possible 'beginning in the cultural reassertion of the nation',[63] Ayodhya was turned into the memory site of an unfulfilled dream, to be fulfilled or, as J K Jain put it in the aforementioned quote, *completed* in the near future.

Power over space by means of monopolizing spatial references is directly linked to the use of modern technologies, such as cartography, as mechanisms to enhance discipline and control of the viewers' ways of seeing and knowing. In its fusion of authoritative text and montaged moving and still images, *From*

the Sea . . . indicates that video raised the expectations of Hindutva representatives. They hoped it would be an ideal pedagogic and performative means for the presentation and enacting of such a 'complex set of associations' that, once montaged in the mind, were to evoke the hyper-real potential that builds the stock of Indianness.

Spatial politics of memory and desire

The central argument of this section on memory's mental maps and the politics of Hindutva nationalism is that through the *yatras* and their depiction in the video media, Hindutva spokespeople attempted to enhance narratives of crisis and lack. With this, the fear of losing identity through loss of memory (amnesia), and the claims for re-constituting identity and regaining memory through 'awakening' came to be linked to territory.[64] Magical healing powers were attributed to the *yatra* by connecting it to acts of collective remembrance and embedding it within the meta-narrative of emancipation and re-creation of home. Furthermore, the underlying message of the *yatra* suggested a meta/physical reunion of the people with an organic past. I suggest that a video like *From the Sea . . .* reveals a Sangh Parivar ideologue's attempt to create a virtual memory-space of a territorial unity and relevance of specific sites. Addressing the idea of a shared, collective memory enables agents to evoke notions of primordiality, of an essential solidarity and 'club' membership via remembrance. The idea behind the attention paid to memory was that, if the desire to remember could be created in audiences, and if this memory could be further moulded according to ideological and pragmatic interests, mobilization would consequently rise to new heights and possibilities. The quasi-magic appeal of reawakening through remembering can be better understood if we connect it to concepts of memory and memory-techniques articulated by scholars of historical and cultural studies.

Magic re-location

What role do the images on display in videos like *From the Sea . . .* or *Unity Pilgrimage* play in this context? How can we understand the appeal to an assumed emancipating and revolutionary power in the cartographic images in the videos? I propose that a shot of the sun rising over the *ghats* (ritual washing places by rivers, also used for the burning of the dead) of Ayodhya, or a superimposition of the map of India on Mughal miniatures, or some old film footage of Muslim warriors, serve as what the German cultural historian Aby Warburg terms as 'energy-containers' or 'engrams' (a term derived from the biopsychology of the early twentieth century). Warburg finds that specific

European Renaissance images, especially those borrowed from ancient Greece, were incorporated in works of art for reasons of status, stability and political power by patrons and artists alike. They permitted their users to 'position' themselves in a field of symbolic power in relation to others. 'Engrams' can be understood as dynamic stimuli that trigger off corporeal experiences, associations and desires in the viewer, camouflaged as 'real' memories based on personal experience.[65] Quite like the Benjaminian 'wish-image', the 'engram' embodies both magic and reason, the power to reinvent the past and to project a future. However, caution is required because the idea of 'energy-container' should not be taken literally in terms of containing an essence and having 'direct impact'. What makes Warburg relevant here, however, is his interest in the constitution of 'engrams' in image chains, as they unfold their polarizing energies in relation to social memory and cosmological orientations. Like 'wish-images' and memory sites, 'engrams' are highly dynamic 'agents'. They help the individual to navigate through and orient him- or herself in space and time, and to shape identity through the imaginary and creative forces of mimesis and alteration. They carry the potential for ideological mobilization in that they are part and parcel of a performance that evolves realism *in statu procedenti*. Thus, the copy becomes even more real than the original—or possibly does not even need an original. To have control over symbolic territory or imagined maps is linked to the attempt to have control of and power over people and their memories, in which ideas of space and identity shape a mnemotic panopticum.

The video images discussed here are energy-filled symbols or 'visual mantras' because of their stereotypical popularity that can, in theory, be loaded and unloaded with meaning. To 'tame' them and ensure their 'correct' decoding, the work of interpretation is ideally performed within the video narrative, that is, linear and authoritative voiceover commentary, songs and careful positioning of images. Presenting these images as part of a 'given' collectively shared memory archive enabled Hindutva spokespeople to create the desire in the viewer to recreate this 'lost' memory, as if self-awareness and awakening could only be regained through their affirmation as link-images to the 'real'.

Walking the sites of virtual memory

Memory and remembrance are often associated with metaphors like 'treasure-house', 'labyrinth' or 'walk'. This has to be taken into consideration when, by performative means, Hindutva representatives attempted to create visions of a shared archive of memories, a storehouse of apparently meaningful and normative stories that connect people firmly to sites and meaning. The result of this engagement of mobilization strategies was the creation of a 'virtual memory' that might not be directly visible in the videos, but nevertheless

enforces the message of purported needs such as collective awakening, restructuring of history and loss of identity.

In this connection, reference shall now be made, through a video like *From the Sea . . .* with its montaged images of landscapes, architecture, or maps, to another spatial concept, the mnemonic techniques of ancient Greece. Through such techniques, certain images and metaphors were to enable a person to position and orient him- or herself in the process of recollecting a discourse, as if furnishing a house.[66] The assumption was that the viewers would only have to imagine link-images or link-sites in order to follow the path of the pilgrimage and visit the sites marked by the map-makers. This way, they can put together and 'remember into being' the mosaic of nationality, as if awakening from a dream or regaining consciousness. For reasons of self-projection, Hindutva ideologues' memory practices required a specific kind of maps, maps which, very much like cosmological diagrams, link worlds, and display the potential for manifold cross-references. With their help, and supported by the 'invisible' apparatus of the video camera, ideological arguments could be communicated and knowledge thus transferred—a Trojan horse filled with fetishes of modern times.

Finally, the temples of Ayodhya and Somnath, and the way in which they came to be presented in *From the Sea . . .* as sites where several spatial concepts and mapping practices were fused, can be taken as what Michel Foucault, when lecturing on 'Other Spaces' in 1967, called a 'heterotopia'. According to Foucault, we live in an epoch of simultaneity and juxtaposition, where sacred and profane sites, closed and open spaces fuse and overlap,[67] creating relations of friendly neighbourhood and hostile Otherness. For example, archives, libraries and museums can be 'heterotopias', because they accumulate histories, memories and experiences, like an archaeological excavation site. They are con/dense/d and dynamic spaces that may offer panoramic views like no other, views upon the imaginary self, the past and the future. A 'heterotopia' is a space of in-between—neither a utopia nor an actual place. It helps agents to position themselves and others, often via dichotomies, to create ideas of sense, meaning and destiny. 'Heterotopias' are furthermore highly normative in their positioning potential, and as such they may become a 'realist' site.[68] Quite like a *teertha* (sacred crossing-place in pilgrimage), the temples of Somnath or Ayodhya came to function like 'heterotopical power-containers' in that they fused several spatial concepts, sacred and political maps, thereby employing social norms and values, and positioning the viewer firmly within the discourse of power.

Displacement: forgetting and remembering oneself

One aspect of 'heterotopia' in *From the Sea . . .* is the narrative of the disputed site in Ayodhya as a battlefield and site of displacement. Memory and desire provided the paper and ink for Hindutva ideology's project of creating their own topography of national identity. Spokespeople of the Sangh Parivar came to acknowledge both the importance of control over memory as a tool for ideological mobilization, and the possibility of using it for the delegation of rights of membership in the imagined Indian community. This is evident as regards the construction of the Babri mosque on the alleged site of Ram's birthplace in Ayodhya, when the voice-over asks:

> Why did the Muslims do this? They did not want to build a place of worship. They wanted to break the symbol of India's pride. The mosque is the symbol of their militant victory. And a symbol of India's defeat and slavery. We have to remove this symbol of slavery and if we have to do that, we must get rid of that supposed mosque and build a temple on that place, a symbol of national pride and self-confidence.

Here, the site functions as a reminder. What slips into this discourse on memory and liberation from slavery under Islamic and British rule is the dialectic relationship between master and slave, and the demand for a reversal of power in which the purported slave should finally become free and self-conscious. But he finds that the path to liberation has been blocked by reminiscences of previous rules that endure to humiliate and haunt with memories of being ruled and humiliated by 'foreigners'. The so-called awakening of the Hindu people can only be fulfilled if the Muslims awaken too, and realise the urgent task of re-mapping their own national identity. In order to be Indian citizens, the Muslims must recognise Hindutva's spatial politics and hand over the Babri mosque as evidence of their acknowledgement. This attitude is inscribed in the following quote by the second leader of the RSS, M S Golwalkar, whose comments on the position of Christians and Muslims in India still linger in much present-day Hindutva rhetoric. He proposed that:

> . . . the crucial point is whether *they* remember that they are the children of this soil. What is the use of merely *our* remembering?! *That* feeling, *that* memory should be cherished by *them* (emphasis added).[69]

To examine the sincerity of the Muslim 'brothers', he developed a 'test question' linked to territorial identity to which he also instantly delivered the answer: 'are they (the Muslims) true to their salt? Are they grateful to this land which has brought them up? Do they feel a duty to serve her? NO!!'[70] In

his *Bunch of Thoughts* he stated that, instead, the Hindu people were forced to be untrue to their identity because even after Independence they were taught amnesia, that is, 'to forget their glorious history, to forget Rana Pratap . . . and, if at all their memory did intrude, to call them "misguided patriots"'.[71]

The disputed site in Ayodhya reflects that, along with the construction of a 'new' Indian map based on Hindutva representative's selection of relevant 'dominant' sites as regards a definition of territorial nationhood, came a complementary process of suggesting that the elimination of designated allegedly 'disturbing' and 'humiliating' sites from this map would lead to a restoration of India's 'true' geobody.

Somatic politics of cartographic anxiety and desire

> *Just as the soul has to have a body, a nation also needs a territory to subsist. So with the utterance of the word 'country', it is not a piece of land alone that we visualise, but it is the sentiment expressed in the song* 'Vande Mataram' (Hail to the Mother) *that is aroused in us. . . . It is obvious that without this feeling of great reverence for the Motherland and complete devotion to her, there can be no nation.*[72]

How can reverence for a map be created and preserved as a 'true' marker of Hindutva Indianness and unite the citizenry under the banner of solidarity and loyalty towards the nation? This question is particularly relevant in the light of the BJP slogan 'unity in diversity'. It provides the imaginary stage to present Hindutva as an essentially tolerant way of life on the one hand, and enabled spokespeople to enforce discriminatory, communalist stereotypes on the other hand. We have so far seen that the notion of *deshbhakti* brotherhood came to unfold through new forms of mapping, or counter-maps. Thereby, the ritual of pilgrimage and the concept of sacred territory played major roles, as well as the conscious overlapping of sacred maps with modern cartographies that were introduced with European expansion politics, particularly colonialism. It has also been argued that the videos mirror the attempt of Hindutva ideologues to create a virtual archive of memory. This memory was 'ready-made' for consumption, not for reflection, and could be employed to further discriminate stereotypes of membership to Hindutva nationhood.

Another key 'wish-image' deserves our attention because it serves to intensify and preserve the feeling of devotional nationalism. This is the personification of the national territory through the relatively new concept and key 'wish-image' of Bharat Mata, Mother India.[73] On many Sangh Parivar paraphernalia items, Mother India is superimposed on the map of India or Greater India, smiling gracefully while holding the saffron flag in one hand, and accompanied by her avatar, the 'lion of patriotism' (see Figure 51). The image also appears in *Unity Pilgrimage*, as well as that of Ram and Mother India



Figure 51 Mother India superimposed on map of Greater India (*Akhand Bharat*). Still from *Unity Pilgrimage.*



Figure 52 Mother India superimposed on Red Fort in Delhi. Still from *Unity Pilgrimage*.

montaged upon a photographic shot of Delhi's Red Fort, where India's Independence was first declared in a public event, thus creating a reference to the Hindu Right's claim to represent India's post-colonial self-empowerment (Figure 52).



Figure 53 Image identifying Ram's body with the body of the nation. Cover of a Sangh Parivar pamphlet (Sehgal 1994). Private collection.

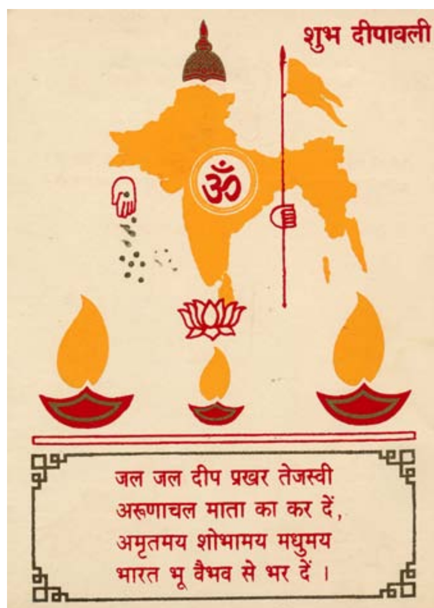


Figure 54 Mother India's body identified as the map of Greater India. Sangh Parivar New Year Card. 1990s. Private collection.

I suggest that Lord Ram and Bharat Mata's function lie in the possibility to both draw and maintain boundaries through the personification of territory and the idealization of familial relationships of deity-nation-people, and appeal to, as well as evoke, cartographic anxieties in the viewer for the purpose of evolving strategies of exclusion and inclusion of the Other (Figures 53, 54). To explore the importance of this image, this section explores the relation between territory, spatial practices and Hindutva nationalism by taking the example of the video *Unity Pilgrimage*.

One of the first images we encounter in the video *Unity Pilgrimage* is the aforementioned bazaar poster of an image of Mother India superimposed on the map of India, recognizable as 'Greater India'. Both Mother India and the map of India, fused or standing alone, combined with shots of other images like the Indian national flag, the BJP flag or the Hindu flag, reappear frequently, giving a distinct rhythm to the narrative of the cult of the nation. In comparison to *From the Sea . . .* , this video claims to document a *yatra* that was not bound to a religious site like Ayodhya, that had enabled Hindutva spokespeople to unearth Hindu history as if it were an archaeological excavation site (Chapter 5).

In *Unity Pilgrimage* the state of Kashmir becomes relevant in its role as a besieged or 'dominated site' in the context of post-colonial India. The main criticism raised in the video is that Kashmir has been isolated from the unity of other states through its special status of enjoying basic autonomy granted by Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, as well as through ongoing demands for a people's referendum that have so far been marginalized by the central and state governments. A G Noorani writes on the situation in Kashmir: 'By 1992, the (Kashmiri) people's complete alienation from the Union has become a grim reality'.[74] Yet, *Unity Pilgrimage* reverses this alienation. The video presents Kashmir as a highly unstable site of national unity, unfolding an emotive argument that gains strength because of its geographical, historical and symbolical link to Partition and the conflict-loaded relationship between India and Pakistan.[75] The video's record of the BJP-leaders' hoisting of the Indian National flag in Srinagar towards the end of the *Unity Pilgrimage* presents the *yatra* as a heroic undertaking by Mother India's children (Figure 55). The footage is accompanied by the staged sound of machine-guns to suggest that the flag-hoisters were under attack by Kashmiri separatists. However, it seems as if the sound of guns was added in the process of post-production in order to increase the narrative tension. Suranjan Das points out that the unfurling of the flag took place 'not with the promised pomp and show but amidst local protests and behind a tight security cordon by the Indian Army'.[76] The emphasis on the successful flag-hoisting ritual in the video has to be understood in the context of the stern demand of BJP leaders that the 'natural' unity of



Figure 55 BJP leaders hoisting the Indian national flag in Srinagar, reading 'Kashmir Hamara Hai' ('Kashmir is ours'). Still from *Unity Pilgrimage.*

the country as a legitimate homeland of the Hindu people should not be questioned by anyone. The voice-over commentary in *Unity Pilgrimage* claims:

> Poisonous separatism is seeking to divide the country. And Kashmir, heaven on earth, is humiliated. Our national flag too, is humiliated. Now the goal of these brave sons of Mother India [while shots of BJP leaders are displayed in montage] is to unfold again the national flag at Srinagar and to challenge the treacherous forces. They [the Hindutva leaders] have pledged to restore the pride and dignity of Mother India. This journey is a warning. It's a warning to divisive forces, it's a warning to the government which has submitted itself to separatism and terrorism.

This BJP video reflects the widely shared view that the Muslims in India particularly, should come to accept that Kashmir is, and will remain a part of India. Underlining the claim to authority, the *yatra* as an act of political rhetoric is even issued as a 'warning'.

Yet, the key interest underlying the *Unity Pilgrimage* was the gearing up of the BJP for the coming parliamentary elections when, although not officially admitted, the rising political tensions in Kashmir were turned into an emotive issue based on morale and sentiment.[77] The voice-over commentary in the video claims that part of the BJP's election manifesto was to 'remove Article 370, abolish terrorism, save Mother India'. Like all special laws granting privileges to minorities, the special constitutional status of Kashmir, according to the video commentary, was not only the sign of illegitimate governance, but also the seed of separatism and civil tensions further dividing the motherland.

Of particular relevance for the discussion here is the reference of the video to Mother India enshrined in its title *Vande Mataram* (Salutation/Hail to Mother India), the motif of 'attack' and the cause for 'defence'. The voice-over commentary in the introductory montage to *Unity Pilgrimage* states:

> So the time has come to give a new challenge. A plan was made to make a journey from Kanya Kumari to Kashmir to preach patriotism. To challenge the politics of the bomb and the gun with the intense power of *Vande Mataram* song and the Unity Pilgrimage. From the sea to the mountains, from mother earth to father earth, so the Unity Pilgrimage was formulated to manifest patriotism as national unity. The intense desire of all our people: Unity Pilgrimage. The inspiration to challenge terrorism: Unity Pilgrimage. The hope of people's power against terrorism and violence: Unity Pilgrimage. The trumpet call against division: Unity Pilgrimage!

On display here was the BJP's vision of territorial and national unity as it unfolded against the backdrop of and in response to intense national crisis.

The major argument was based on the assumption that territorial and national unity are both ancient, 'god-given' 'truths' that cannot be challenged. The reference to the song '*Vande Mataram*,' composed by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya in 1875, then incorporated in his novel *Anandamath* (1882), is evident. Tanika Sarkar has addressed the song's role in the history of mass mobilization and agitation for the national/Hindu cause[78] and noted its performative translation/transgression which is modelled after devotional Hindu chants (*debbhasha*, the language of gods) into an explicitly martial chant.[79] The voice-over commentary in the video evokes the idea that the nation's devotee-children could constitute themselves as such a martial brotherhood in the act of singing, of giving expression to their devotion to the motherland. This example, and the following discussion, seem to affirm Sumathi Ramaswamy's suggestion that nationalism is one of 'modernity's most intriguing love story',[80] and is further explored in the discussion on Hindutva martyrdom (Chapter 6).

This romantic devotion is connected to a specific cartography, anatomy and history. Video-maker Matthew S further explains the identification of territorial and national identity in modern times with the allegedly ancient concepts of the nation:

> I tell you: The film started with *Bharat* [India]. The *concept* of Bharat. When I talk about Bharat, and I know I'm talking in terms of the BJP, when I talk about Bharat, it's a Bharat which I visualise that includes Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Burma and all these countries. They [these countries] were part of Undivided Bharat. Bharat was *so* big [Matthew S spreads his arms]. Then I started taking in the history. How India become *so* small [he pinches an inch with one hand]. Invasions, foreign invaders came to India and attacked her culture. That ruined India. Then the Britishers came and they ruled this country. And they divided this country again into three parts. One went to Pakistan, one went to Bangladesh . . . Our holy rivers, like Sindhu, Ganga, Brahmaputra, they were all divided. Some went to Pakistan, some went to Bangladesh. So the *real* Bharat, Bharat was scattered by foreign invaders, into the different countries. Whether it was Muslims, whether it was the Britishers; division was the concept. Then they started saying 'look, to *unite* this country we have to *pledge* for the unity'. And the pledge for the unity is *Ekta Yatra*. *Ekta Yatra* was taking place from Kanya Kumari to Kashmir, from one end to another end. This was the concept.[81]

In Matthew S's quote, various cosmological and colonial cartographies and experiences discussed above were collapsed into the one 'heterotopian' entity of Bharat Mata and the map of India. The idea behind the rhetoric was that

India's territory was sacred and personified as a woman in order to enhance in the viewers the desire to remember, revere and protect her. The suggestion was that, to a large extent, India's fate and unity depended on Kashmir and that, for the first time in India's post-colonial history, a political party had come to realise and address the true meaning of nationhood and resist the country's ongoing fragmentation.

The gendered language of nationalism

> Mother, I bow to thee!
> Rich with thy hurrying streams, Bright with thy orchard flames,
> Cool with thy winds of delight, Dark fields weaving,
> Mother of Might, Mother free.
> . . . .
> Mother, I kiss thy feet!
> . . .
> Dark of hue, O candid-fair, On thy soul, with jewelled hair
> And thy glorious smile divine, Loveliest of all earthly lands
> *Showering wealth from well-stored hands. Mother, mother mine!. . .*[82]

In its dedication to Mother India, *Unity Pilgrimage* puts forward the claim that Kashmir will have to remain a part of India. Based on the personification of India as a female body, as, for example, indicated in the above poem addressing Mother India, the demand is that She must under no circumstances be 'decapitated'. In an interview, Ramesh K, scriptwriter and narrator for many of the videos discussed here, explained, 'Kashmir is the crown of India. Nobody can make it separate. Pakistan grabbed some lands of Hindusthan, we'll try to arrange to get it back'.[83] In montage, the video clashes images of paradisal settings with visual quotations of evocations of a present state of hell, accompanied by a song referring to different aspects of the motherland and the fact that people still keep marching together under the national flag. Against this backdrop of alleged unity, other scenes are inserted, carrying the footage of bombs exploding, and blurred docu-drama scenes of militants seemingly preparing for a guerrilla war by smuggling weapons into India and attacking invisible goals (Figure 56). These shots are edited against picturesque footage of the (once) beautiful valley of Kashmir, of Srinagar's Dal Lake, itself the incarnation of romantic love, manifest in poetry and Hindi movies (see Figure 50). The voice-over commentary, as we read in the aforementioned quote on the alleged poisonous separatism, referred to Kashmir as a 'heaven on earth'. In a Jain Studios video produced on the Kashmir issue in 1993, entitled *Traitors/Invaders beware, India is ready!*,[84] the voiceover commentary even takes up the role of a virtual Mother India when it declares, in reference



Figure 56 Still from a staged scene depicting the threat of militants infiltrating India from Pakistan, in *Unity Pilgrimage.*

to Chattopadyaya's poem: 'I am India. The Himalaya mountains are the guards of my frontiers. From Kashmir to Kanja Kumari in the South and from Kamru in Assam to Kutch in the West, I am one.' Equally, then BJP leader A B Vajpayee is presented as he addresses a public meeting, proclaiming that, 'the valley of Kashmir is very beautiful. Kashmir is the Eden of India. That someone (Pakistan) looks at Kashmir with greedy eyes is not surprising.' These examples personify territory as a woman and make her the focus of (male) nationalist desire or jealousy. Likewise, they help Hindutva spokespeople to communicate visions of a utopian national community as an organism entrenched in a familial relation with Mother India.

The icon of Bharat Mata superimposed on the map of India came to be a major building block of *deshbhakti* in the context of Hindutva. In visuals, as well as poetry, it fused somatic metaphors (territory and people as bodies) that translated both cartographic anxieties (fears of invasion and fragmentation) and cartographic desires (territorial unity and empowerment). The chain of associations linked to the image of Bharat Mata enabled Hindutva ideologues to refine and legitimize their scope of agency as a purely defensive reaction to an alleged aggressor, evident in the footage of invading Mughal hordes, the Kashmiri Muslims' insistence on more autonomy or the central government's purported politics of 'pampering' Indian Muslims in general.

This chain of associations also allowed for the projection of a national community with a home in which Kashmir came to stand for the potential homelessness of the Hindu people. Since the early 1990s, because of the

increasing tensions in Kashmir, many Kashmiri Hindus sought refuge on the plains of the neighbouring province of Jammu or in other Indian states. This 'lack of home' proved to be ideal material for emotive mobilization and found reflection in *Unity Pilgrimage* where the refugees could be referred to as innocent, displaced and suffering exiles, waiting to return to their homeland.

While Bharat Mata became the prototype of the desired object, the commodified fetish of nationalist devotion, the BJP tended to represent itself, and be perceived, as active and male. This is quite common in the imagining of nation-states, where state and government are attributed with a paternalistic role in relation to the citizenry in order to shape models of state and civil agency. Afsaneh Najmabadi in his article on the notion of homeland in Iran, argues: 'The more the homeland became a protected female category, the more the state became the male protector'.[85] Such a related vision of state and society is complemented by the idea of the nation and its territory as passive objects of desire, personified as a woman that needs and demands to be protected by an active male. The figure presented as Bharat Mata is a young and attractive woman, clad in what looks like a bridal or royal robe. Yet, despite erotic associations in visual and verbal imagery, these are sidelined through referring to Bharat Mata exclusively in her role as mother of sons (barely any daughters), and Indian citizenry. Her ambiguous status is also inherent in the fact that she is commonly only accompanied by her vehicle, the 'lion of patriotism', very often holding a flag in her hand. This is quite unusual for the depiction of goddesses since they are, when shown in the peaceful mode, generally displayed as the consort of their husband gods. The empty space next to her may thus be a space to be filled alone by the projection of 'imagined others', such as her sons.

Mother India's geobody and the 'political' body of the map merge in response to the European idea of the nation-state, which was imported with colonialism. However, the personification of India as a human body and organism—Sumathi Ramaswamy convincingly employs the term 'bodyscape' for this model[86]—could also derive from *shastric* (doctrinal) notions of polity, and a reinterpretation of cosmological diagrams, such as the *vastu purusha*, in which not only society but elements of polity come to be presented as bodily portions linked to a cosmological order. In his study on pilgrimage in India, Bhardwaj, for example, refers to the sacredness of sites and crossing places (*teerthas)* as a cosmological body to the epic *Mahabharata*, and claims: 'Just as certain limbs of the body are purer than others, so are certain places on earth more sacred—some on account of their situation, others because of their sparkling waters, and others because of the association or habitation of saintly people'.[87] But what changed with the idea of the modern nation state was that loyalties were now disconnected from the medieval notions of kingship, and focused instead

on a logo-ized territory and anonymous state. As discussed in Chapter 2, Hindutva ideologues promoted a view of society that portrayed civil society as a family unit, with its members tied to each other through fate and the dedication to protect their mother's honour and integrity. In this moral corset, each of them is obliged to follow the Hindutva recourse of what they define as a code of morality and honour (*dharma*), and to pay devotion to the 'national ideals' personified by Bharat Mata, as indicated in the poem to the Motherland quoted in the section on the Picturesque (see Chapter 6).

The social life of Mother India

The goddess referred to is a relatively new figure with close links to Hindu revivalism, the struggle for Independence and the idea of the modern nation-state as a homeland. Mother India has never been solely used by Sangh Parivar organizations.[88] Nevertheless, in Hindutva ideology she ranks undeniably high as a primordial entity, the incarnation of pan-national territorial and cultural unity and the receiver of nationalist passion.

Some 'biographical' explorations of somatic metaphors may be useful to understand the ways of seeing that lie more or less invisibly and silent behind an icon like Bharat Mata, even though Mother India has to be seen as a cultural specific result of appropriating European notions into various models of Indian nationalism, for example, by the Congress Party, but particularly by Hindutva agents . The analogy of the state and the body, or the organic nature of society suggested through anthropomorphic metaphors and/or images in Hindutva iconography, is nothing new. Somatic maps appeared in medieval Europe, for example in the Erbstorf map, where an entire map is depicted as lying in the embrace of a crucified Christ.[89] There are also early explorers' maps which, for example, show the coast of north Africa shaped as a woman.[90] The iconography of the national territory personified as a gendered object of desire is furthermore evident in European art, especially in caricatures and prints from the French Revolution onwards. Indeed, this iconography came to accompany and thus reflect the rise of modern civil societies and nation states.[91] In France, the country has been identified with a woman since mediaeval times (*Domina Francia*), an early example of what later became common practice all over Europe with the rise of nation-states in the nineteenth century. Caricatures of the turn-of-the-century in Europe depict Britannia, Germania or Marianne (France) as imprisoned, seduced and abused by intruding male forces.[92]

In his discussion of European metaphors and fears, Werner Schiffauer has pointed to the European tradition of conceptualizing state and society/nation as a social body by means of somatic metaphors.[93] Referring to Ernst Kantorowicz's study, *The King's Two Bodies*, particularly the notion of the *corpus*

mysticum, Schiffauer explicates on the genesis of the organic concept of the mystical body and the secular or public body, in order to be able to contextualize the somatic fears of particular social groups in contemporary Europe and the USA as they position themselves in a relation to the state as well as other social groups, for example, immigrants. Kantorowicz argues that the mystical body of Christ reflected in the Church in France (and enhanced by Aristotle's notion of the state as political and ethical body [*corpus morale et politicum*]) was, in the thirteenth century fused with the concept of the state as a holy empire (*sacrum imperium*).[94] With the French Revolution, the Republic, rather than the absolute monarchy, came to be allegorized as an organic unity. Along with this transformation, came the idea that the modern state could demand that its citizens must provide for its existence and stability.[95] Somatic and familial metaphors enabled power-brokers to enhance ideas of fraternity and demand sacrifices from the members of the imagined body for the sake of preventing its alleged fragmentation.

The icon of Mother India carries in her the ambivalent potential both to unite and divide, and to express national devotion as well as communal hatred. Several films revolve around her as a national allegory,[96] while the song *Vande Mataram* itself stirred up controversy and tensions due to colonial censorship.[97] Censorship practices only increased the symbolic value of 'subversive' material and strengthened the bonds of solidarity and resistance between the people who circulated it. Mother India's 'career' is directly linked to the anti-colonial struggles. Presented superimposed upon the map of India she has appeared on a whole range of paraphernalia of popular culture, such as newspapers, leaflets, pamphlets, etc. since the first decade of the 20th century. In 1936, a temple dedicated to Mother India was opened in Benares, featuring 'a giant marble relief map of undivided India'.[98] After Independence the icon appeared in school material and state propaganda in order to communicate 'patriotism' as a prime ideal and duty for Indian citizens. In the 1960s, for example, a poster of Mother India was circulated on which she served as a mascot for devoted nationalists in the Indo-China war; her head covering the contested state of Kashmir. More than a decade later, Indira Gandhi campaigned with hoardings on which she was identified with Bharat Mata, depicted crying and superimposed on the map of India. Slogans further promoted identification of Indira with India, and vice versa. This adaptation of a cult of personalized nationalist devotion was to increase Indira Gandhi's charisma.[99] There are also regional versions of Mother India, for example in Tamil Nadu,[100] and in political propaganda used by agents such as the Telugu Desam Party in the state of Andhra Pradesh.

Bharat Mata can be partly understood as a result of mimesis and alteration in the context of 'internalized Orientalism', that is, as a trope of the West, a

product of the male gaze upon an exoticized—and eroticized—object. This becomes particularly evident in allegorical works of oriental and colonial imagination, where India took the role of the female handing over India's power to the male colonial ruler[101] or when she was depicted in chains receiving the head-sacrifices of her devout sons (Figure 57). Present-day iconography of Sangh Parivar paraphernalia also show her as a geobody involved in a narrative of being threatened by foreign men, whether as Muslims encroaching India as dragons, or a viciously smiling Dracula-like 'Uncle Sam'. No matter how strong her appeal to invoke nationalist devotion it is always a strength aligned to her main symbolic capital—to attract her son's devotion. Men thus remain the final beholders of (political) power and agency.

Cartographic desires and anxieties

I have mentioned that *Unity Pilgrimage* begins with a version of the *Vande Mataram* song,[102] visually supported by shots of the sea, a montage of BJP leaders, and the Indian national flag. To 'beat the rhythm of national unity', as one line goes, is the video's key intention. But with its repeated montages of Mughal invasion and present-day militancy suggesting ongoing internal and external aggression towards India's unity, *Unity Pilgrimage* was to function as a breeding screen on which metaphors of cartographic anxiety could be projected. The greatest cartographic threat is of ethnophobic and/or xenophobic origin, manifest in ideas of the 'invisible hand' of invaders[103] or separatist



Figure 57 Mother India in chains receiving the head-sacrifices of freedom fighters Bhagat Singh and friends (c. 1931), Nehru Memorial Library, Photographic Collection, Delhi (No. 36508).

'conspiracies' against India. Some of the metaphors have been mentioned in the previous paragraph and have their own distinct routes within the histories of the subcontinent.[104] Hindutva spokespeople's response to the alleged threats was a slogan appropriated by the BJP from earlier political rhetoric, that is 'unity in diversity'. Director Matthew S comments thus on the title song of *Unity Pilgrimage*:

> It describes in a very interesting manner that the culture of this land combines all cultures. Kerala has a different culture, Tamil Nadu has a different culture. The song says that 'we are all one'. Why do you think, should I be talking of Punjabis and Keralites—*we are Bharatis*, we are Indians. So that was the concept I started to impose on that video.[105]

Unity versus fragmentation—in order to counter cartographic threat, 'culture' becomes the common denominator for, and the 'shining emblem'[106] of, solidarity. Once again, crisis is the dramatic narrative enforcing Hindutva rhetoric of persuasion. The title song in *Unity Yatra* appeals to visions of present-day India by referring back to the past, allegedly an era of slavery for the Indian people:

> Every day there is a massacre. Do something! The country is burning. Do something! Make sure that we don't become slaves again, our national unity is being questioned, you shall respond to the rhythm of national unity . . . don't let her (India) be sullied and insulted! India is the land of everybody, everybody should have equal rights!

Metaphors of a country on fire, of masters and slaves, and of an underlying 'pulse' or 'rhythm of life' are evoked by suggesting that Mother India, the bearer of cultural permanence and national unity is constantly endangered. The video carries what director Mathew S calls 'electronic posters', for example a map of Pakistan and India is presented with images shaped like missiles, moving from Pakistan across the border and entering India (Figure 58). The voice-over commentary reports, with the authority of a newsreader, that Pakistan encourages terrorism and seeks further fragmentation of India by supporting militants in India's critical areas. While it is true that the government of Pakistan subsidized guerrilla activists in the disputed area of Kashmir along the disputed Line of Control, the threat of the narrative of invasion, like those animated missiles, is intended to cross geographical boundaries—to literally go 'beneath the skin'. This is reflected in the voiceover commentary that directly follows the electronic poster described above. It attempts to take the viewers back in time to show them what is presented as India's history of territorial invasions and the struggle of brave Indians to

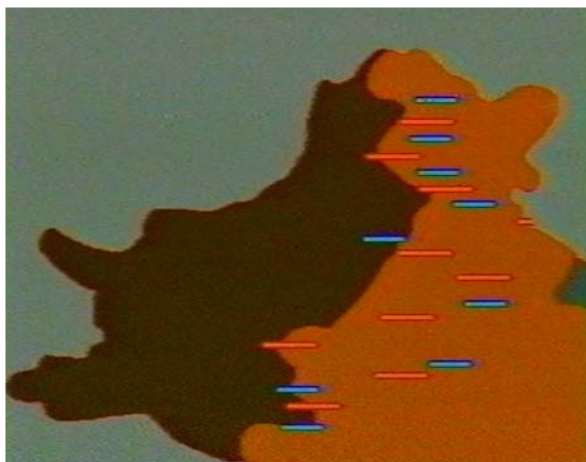


Figure 58 Shot from an animated scene depicting Pakistani missiles entering India. Still from *Unity Pilgrimage*.

defend that territory, Mother India. Be it the Pakistani government or self-made militants (see Figure 56), according to the voice-over commentary:

> . . . their intentions are the same. To cut Mother India into pieces. But they don't know that the unity of India rests on its cultural heritage which is based on the idea of equal respect for all religions and that Mother and Motherland are higher even than heaven. This gives us the power to prevent attacks and that is why India is still able to withstand all different invasions. History is a witness that Indian heroes have never left the sari of Mother India empty with their sacrifices. Guru Gobind Singh, Shivaji, Rani Lakshmibai, Chandrashekar Azad, Bhagat Singh, heroes like these, gave their sacrifices willingly, along with Savarkar and Hedgewar, Shyama Prasad Mookerjee and Deendayal Upadhyaya (their portraits are shown as popular prints). They gave the coming generation the eternal message of patriotism. . . . So how can our blood not boil?![107]

Cartoon drawings of battlefields, with *sadhus* and *mahants* (heads of monastic orders) as the keepers of Indianness, with corpses covered in blood, the sound of canons, and the eternal saffron Hindu flag and, of course, with the recurring map of India superimposed upon footage of horses galloping across the wide plains of India, all feature in this staging of warfare, and self-empowerment through self-defence. These shots are combined with shots of popular bazaar prints of Sikh or Hindu spiritual leaders, regional warrior-kings and Hindutva ideologues. Guru Gobind Singh, Rana Pratap, Shivaji, Veer Savarkar, S P Mookherjee and Deendayal Upadhyaya, are all related to each other in this

chain of images, because, according to the voice-over commentary, all fought the intruders selflessly, defended the honour of the Motherland and were prepared to give up their lives for her (Chapter 6). This is, one should add, very much a simulated and standardized unity of 'resistance'. By no means have all the figures, appropriated into the visual vocabulary of those montages, fought for Hindu nationalism and territory. Gobind Singh fought for an idea of Sikhism as an alternative spiritual and political brotherhood, and Vikram Aditya, Shivaji and Rana Pratap were regional kings who defended their kingdoms against invaders. Still, in the interpretation of the BJP, they were all subsumed under the umbrella of unity, apparently erasing all cultural differences within the boundary of Hindu culture. They are employed in order to enhance in the viewer ideas of a vast territory of heroic Hindu/Indian history, in that they function as narrative and visual knots and historical memory sites that cover the imagined map of Hindutva Indianness horizontally and vertically like a dense net. In this way, they were meant to empower Hindutva spokespeople to draw and guard the borders and crossings on the mental maps of people's minds.

The homeless Muslim

I have stated above that *Heimat*, or homeland, came to be a significant constituent of (territorial) national identity. I then went on to suggest that the videos discussed reflect the interest of Hindutva ideologues in shaping memory and territorial loyalties by referring to pilgrimage and the sacredness of land in such a way that their vision of Indianness could be realised. Here, we encounter a metaphorical game of boundary drawing that refers to *two* different kinds of displaced people. One is the 'Hindu refugee', who has been made homeless through centuries of invasion and colonial rule and whose homelessness is further enhanced by allegedly ignorant government politics. The second category is central to the construction of a stereotypical 'Other', for it is the 'anti-national' and even 'communalist' Muslim, who was to be stigmatized in a homelessness that arose from their alleged lack of reverence for Mother India, and refusal to associate with the fraternity or family of Hindus that derives from this kind of personification. Instead, they were said to privilege the *ummah* (transnational Muslim brotherhood) instead of the Hindutva family and Mecca instead of Ayodha and equivalents. The notion of an authentic traditional familial community enabled Hindutva representatives to create and position a recognisable Other. Emotions were further increased by reference to the fact that many current Muslim families were formerly Hindus, forcibly converted under Mughal rule and have never looked back since or, alternatively, have forgotten their past. Hindutva rhetoric put the

matter this way: Some of the family members in the diverse unity of the Indian nation-state were said to have 'drifted away' from the *volonté générale* of the family. Thus firmly positioned as outsiders and seen as having 'betrayed' the sacred community of the family brotherhood, they were now stigmatized as alien/ated traitors and further as a source of the threat of humiliation and territorial fragmentation. Darvendra Swarup, an RSS and VHP historian, lectured that: 'Islam as an ideology does not accept nationalism. Do you know the Muslim concept of *ummah*? . . . In Islam, *religion* is the basis for community formation, not territory'.[108] This comment mirrors Veer Savarkar's attempt to define the threatening 'Other', e.g., Islam and Christianity, when he claims that

> That is why . . . some of our Mohammedan or Christian countrymen . . . cannot be recognized as Hindus . . . Their holyland is far off in Arabia or Palestine. Their mythology and Godmen, ideas and heroes are not the children of this soil . . . Their love is divided.[109]

However, research, for instance on the notion of motherland, territory and patriotism in Iran around 1900, has demonstrated that this is a great simplification.[110]

Stereotypes of anti-national Muslims enjoy popularity, as the following proclamation of senior BJP leader Vijaya Rajmata Scindia demonstrates. Footage from *Unity Pilgrimage* shows her addressing the public in *Unity Pilgrimage*, where she almost cynically identifies all Muslim 'friends' with militants:

> I want to tell the terrorists *and* those Muslim friends who want to be separated from us that we are one family, we will not be happy if you try to divide our family. *We will live as one family, India is our mother and we are her children.* This is the tradition in the BJP that we uphold. We don't consider you to be separate. The success of this yatra has troubled the terrorists. They have written slogans that if you have drunk your mother's milk, come to Srinagar and unfurl the flag. I want to tell them that this is exactly what we will do. It will then be decided who has drunk their mother's milk.

The dogmatic undertones as regards 'family rules' are evident; Scindia's reference to milk is also not coincidental. Ramaswamy[111] has emphasized that milk is one of a number of images embedded in the sensual vocabulary surrounding Mother India and community constitution that link the son of Mother India not only to her, but also cross-connect him with his other brothers (and sisters). Ramaswamy proposes that, the 'Images of shared womb, blood, milk, and tears of the female embodiment of the nation were circulated . . . to enable the forging of the community, and the communion of the citizenry'.[112] These elements 'reminded the citizenry of the bonds of birth, of

the sharing of substances, of the very commonalities that emerge from belonging to . . . the "imagined" community of the nation'.[113] With them, caste and class differences were expected to be ignored, an essential precondition for the mobilization for unity, high on the Hindutva agenda, as discussed in Chapter 2. However, Scindia's harsh remark that one will see 'who has drunk their mother's milk' relates to Judgement Day and betrayal rather than solidarity and trust.

The various acts of classification and positioning described here can be better understood with Bhabha's work on the racist stereotype in colonial discourse. What Bhabha terms the 'creation of a space for a "subject peoples" through the production of a fixed reality'[114] came to be reinforced in Hindutva ideologues' efforts to appropriate and discriminate the Other through both forced integration (desire for unity) and xenophobic fetishization (rejection of the Other).[115] The Muslims were depicted as brothers and part of the family. At the same time, the Other was firmly fixed by placing him or her outside the shared ethic beliefs and practices of the 'Hindu people'. This outsider could thus be presented, as well as attacked, as threatening the 'vulnerable' familial body.

New routes and ribbons

Unity Pilgrimage brings both the nation's crisis and its ideal (the notion of ancient and true unity of the nation) in front of the viewer's eyes, with an energy and life that no other media could have shown in such a way. In a sense, the whole video can be read as tracing the map of India, laboriously showing us the states and their borders, repeatedly displaying the map of India as a visual reminder of the desired unity, and even addressing the viewer with the 'voice of India'. Orientation, positioning, remembering and fusing were channelled to such an extent that utmost control over the viewer's desires and ways of seeing could be executed. There is a picture by (Paul) Klee called 'Angelus Novus'. An angel is presented in it who looks as if he were about to move away from something at which he is staring. His eyes are wide open, mouth agape, wings spread. The angel of history must look like that. His face is turned toward the past. Where a chain of events appears to us, he sees one single catastrophe which relentlessly piles wreckage upon wreckage, and hurls them before his feet . . . The storm (from Paradise) drives him irresistibly into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows toward the sky. That which we call progress is this storm. The video is presented as a close friend who takes the viewers by the hand and leads them on a 'journey home', revealing to them the meaning of *deshbhakti*, and successively transforming them into devotees of the national territory. The invisible eye

and voice of the video camera narrated the hi/stories of people and places, concerns and experiences, as if they had always been a part of the collective consciousness. In this way, nation and citizenry come to be imagined as living bodies. Hence, on both the narrative and aesthetic level, a tactile nearness was created, a hyper-reality suggesting that seeing was intimately knowing and acting. Different temporal and spatial concepts were assembled in the montage nature of the videos and *yatra* rhetoric, thereby creating a new rationale and linearity that fed into the authoritative scriptwriting of the producers. The videos camouflage Hindutva doctrine as a platform for personal agency and participation—like pilgrimage—selling this second nature as an 'authentic' mind-map and geobody.

The 'magical realism' of the above-discussed videos gained strength from the intertwined realms of the visible here and the invisible imagined elsewhere, the dialectics of utopia and hell, home and homelessness, the stereotyping of self and others by means of dramatization. Neither *From the Sea . . .* nor *Unity Pilgrimage* are shown in public any more. Other patriotic pilgrimages and new, more sophisticated, media productions have pushed them to the background of political representation and identity constitution. One such example is *Vande Mataram*, a series of video clips produced by Bharatbala Productions in 1997, and broadcast on state and private television for the commemoration of 50 years of Independence. The series reflects the increasing commodification of the cult of the flag and the nation as motherland.[116] It testifies that the image of Mother India continues to play a major role in nation building and mapping of national identity, even outside Sangh Parivar politics. The producer, Bharatbala, said about the video series' intention:

> We needed to put a ribbon round this country to create one big idea which will pull its people through. And for this, you needed one icon to cling on to . . . I am talking of a new order in patriotism. Today we are not fighting for freedom of a boundary, we are not fighting for a geographical freedom any more. We are fighting for freedom of inner space. We are fighting an open battle in the world today as far as knowledge, technology, communication are concerned . . . Constantly the fight is there, whatever it may be. It takes a new route. As long as you make it exciting, what is chauvinism? Nation building is the basic brand that is required today. India needs that.[117]

This statement also demonstrates that the use of cartographic desires and anxieties continues, this time manifested in the challenge of economic globalization.

Hindutva ideology's 'quest for nationalist realism' through the rhetoric of *deshbhakti* may temporarily overcome itself and become a floating detached

emblem. This has very recently become evident in the light of the *Bharat Uday yatra* (India Shining Pilgrimage) undertaken by LK Advani from Kanya Kumari (South) to Amritsar (North), and from Porbandar (West) to Puri (East) in the advent of the 13. Parliamentary Elections in 2004. Economic growth and prosperity were linked to the neoliberal politics of the NDA government, projecting a modernised, happy and proud nation. As long as even an emblem like Mother India promises political and more recently, economic participation of various kinds, it may appeal to segments within Indian society, no matter in what kind of mapping process and camouflage it is embedded within.

In the case of the Bharat Uday Yatra, however, broad criticism arose that India was shining only for the happy few members of the upwardly mobile middle classes profiting from the suggested 'boom' through economic liberalisation. The majority of Indians could not identify with the projected 'feel-good factor' and to some extent the election results which brought the Congress-I back into power can be traced back to the BJP's failure of convincingly projecting India(s economy) as 'shining' at a time when unemployment, de-industrialisation, education, health, housing and poverty have worsened the situation in the public sector, and communal tensions are ongoing and organised, as the Gujarat riots of 2002 have shown. As a reaction to the BJP ostensibly being out of control, and out of power, following the election results, the RSS leadership has criticised the party for having detached itself from Hindutva, and consequently issued demands to strengthen ideological ties and practices again. Despite the new 'pop patriotism'[118] introduced by a figure like Bharatbala, the politics of re-mapping Indianness that evolved in the context of the Ayodhya campaign left deep scars on the skin of civil society, and changed the mental maps of large parts of the Indian citizenry for good, particularly with the demolition of the Babri mosque in 1992. And the ongoing disputes about the reconstruction of the temple, as well as the Kashmir issue, point towards a longevity of cartographic desires and anxieties as dynamic ribbons of nationality.

5

RE-MAKING HISTORY: 'THE TRUTH SHALL NOT BE TOUCHED!'



Figure 59 Mother India superimposed on a map of a desertified India. Cover from a Hindutva booklet entitled *Mother's Call* (Batra 1996). Private collection.

> *This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing in from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such a violence that the angel*

can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.

(Walter Benjamin, *Theses on History*[1])

This chapter explores Hindutva spokespeople's attempts to exploit the video media in the context of nation building with respect to the notion of history. The key argument is that Jain Studios' videos were used to create consensus in the viewers that India's history had to be rewritten by re-making it. The new media technology was one tool through which Hindutva spokespeople strove to persuade audiences to get personally involved in what was referred to as an unavoidable 'turning point in history', and another step to Hindu people's self-empowerment. The idea behind this was that those who hold the past control the future.

In this chapter, attention is focused on the videos' narration of a history of the 'Hindu people' as the 'true' history of India, as opposed to a 'foreign' history made by others, and imposed upon the Hindu people in order to detach them from their past and origin. By taking Walter Benjamin's comments on Paul Klee's drawing of 'Angelus Novus', a think-space shall be opened in which the Sangh Parivar's creation of history can be aligned to the views of the 'angel of history'. With the notion of the past as a chain of 'wreckages' and catastrophes, Sangh Parivar ideologues shaped a particular idea of progress that enforced desires for a dramatic 'turning point in history'. The Ayodhya controversy was to function as stage for this paradigmatic change, and the metamorphosis of wreckage into paradisial vessel. Yet, the shift was also accompanied by the making of a history for those allegedly responsible for the piles of wreckage—this move enabled the 'authentification' of stereotypes of the Muslim in particular.

In this analysis, spatial sites like Ayodhya come to play an important discursive role—not predominantly as horizontal referents—but as points of orientation along a vertical chronological axis. Rather than being part of the 'ribbon' of pilgrimage movement that held together the nation-territory in the videos discussed in the previous chapter, the site shall now be discussed as a locus of metaphorical archaeological excavation, a site of self-dis/recovery. Out of this 'heterotopian' space, Sangh Parivar ideologues evolved narratives of people-hood based on the idea that the Ayodhya Movement was a 'turning point in Indian history'.[2] Seen in this light, the act of rewriting history became an interpretative process both of revelation and hiding; of recovering and putting on display sediments of societal past; and of remembering, and reconstituting society's lineage. Evolving from this is a specific relationship between, and interpretation of myth and history with regard to, the assessment of what speakers of the Hindu Right came to present as a continuous history of battles and crises of governance.

History unfolds a peculiar ambiguity, both in the making available of experiences of discontinuity and alienation, manifest in the seemingly paralysed

angel of history staring at the 'garb' of modernity as an ongoing catastrophe,[3] and in the forward-marching revolutionary, or son of Mother India, who takes the nation's fate into his hands. While the previous chapter emphasized how Jain Studios videos played a role as 'living maps' that emerged in front of the viewer through Hindutva's project of re-mapping territory, in this chapter, the video media come to occupy the imaginary space of national identity as 'living history'.

The role of the Ayodhya controversy as a tool for the scripting of a stage-play of Hindutva against the secular state government, and of Muslims as a 'pampered' segment of Indian society has been outlined before. Of interest in this chapter is how the selected videos came to support the Sangh Parivar's effort to use a particular site for the construction of historical 'truth' in order to intensify the quality of attacks on the state and its alleged profiteers, and to expand political representation into the formal political arena of the nation-state and public consciousness. The videos became the visual complement of nation-building as a narrative strategy, a discourse on power over people's minds.

Like many other events orchestrated by Hindutva agents in the context of the Ayodhya controversy, the video media, too, invite the viewers to feel part of a larger movement. Hindutva event-managers hoped that rallies, or political processions, united supporters by means of what Julia Eckert has termed 'politics of direct action'. Writing on the strategies through which participation in a movement is created among supporters (*sainiks*) in the context of the nativist Shiv Sena in Maharashtra, Eckert argues that 'In these actions *sainiks* do experience collective power . . . of a sort, which is not merely handed down to them via political power of their leaders, but which actually rests on their force, their numbers, and their muscle power.'[4]

This is what the videos appealing to the need to rewrite history attempt to evoke in potential Hindutva supporters: the desire to participate in a movement that will, by their own force, come to change (Hindu) history's path.

Overview

The discussion of how the videos represent the Sangh Parivar's attempt to gain power over history and its making, in order to enhance legitimacy for the Hindutva agents to project themselves as only 'true' and 'righteous' political representatives of the Indian nation, will touch upon the notion of historical truth and evidence, as well as the entwined relationship between history and myth in the creation of an unfolding historical epic of the 'Hindu people'. The performances and pedagogies employed by the Hindu Right in order to disenchant and alienate Hindus from Muslims through the enforcement of antagonistic stereotypes of a purported 'Hindu sentiment' and a 'Muslim

psyche' are also considered. Finally, the reactions to the violence that cropped up in the context of the Ayodhya controversy, especially with respect to the demolition of the Babri mosque on December 6, 1992 and the violent clashes that occurred between Hindus and Muslims, are examined by analysing Jain Studios agents' responses to the video's role in the controversy, in particular, in its task to remake history.

This analysis draws upon material from the Jain Studios video *God Manifests Himself*.[5] The video narrates the history of the 'Hindu people' in the light of the Ram *Shila Puja* (worship of Ram's sacred bricks), a politico-religious ritual that was staged by the BJP, the VHP and the RSS as a mass spectacle in Ayodhya in autumn 1989 (see Chapter 3). The second video, *The Truth Shall Not Be Touched* (*Saach ko anch na Pyareh*, 1992, Hindi), takes us almost three years further down the line. Made shortly before the demolition of the Babri mosque in December 1992, it supports the claim of the Sangh Parivar for the 'liberation' of Ram's birthplace by presenting the audience with 'evidence' on the truth and legitimacy behind the increasingly controversial and violent movement. The last video, *Ayodhya 6 December 1992: What Happened? Who Did It? Why Was It Done?* (*Ayodhya 6 December 1992: Kya Hua? Kisne Kiya? Kyo Kiya?*, 1993, Hindi; hereafter, *Ayodhya 6 December 1992*), was made in the aftermath of the Babri mosque's demolition. It presents a variety of reasons both justifying the act of destruction, and blaming the secular state, more precisely the government, for the escalation of riotous events.

A few words on the production and distribution of these videos are in order. Even though the Sangh Parivar used them, none of these videos was officially commissioned from any of the Sangh Parivar organizations. They evolved out of the initiative of Dr J K Jain, who approached his comrades in the higher ranks of the BJP, RSS and VHP for consultation and final approval when he felt that his ideas could be realized with adequate footage and special effects. The videos had to be produced fairly quickly: *GMH* took less than six months, *The Truth Shall Not Be Touched* even less than that, and the last video was probably made in a few weeks—given the high pressure on the Sangh Parivar to send out messages of legitimization.

History between fate and self-empowerment

> *Histories, transformations of the past into expressions . . . constitute,* are *a present social reality. Histories always have this* double entendre. *They refer to a past in making a present . . . Histories are fictions—something made of the past—but fictions whose forms are metonomies of the present.*[6]

The concept underlying the visual representation of the Ayodhya campaign was that of presenting the video-viewer with a Hindutva version of the Hindu

people's history, by fascinating him or her with the collective project of self-assertion through the re-writing of history under the organized leadership of the Sangh Parivar. Thus power at the political centre could possibly be seized.

Sangh Parivar spokespeople maintain that the Hindu people's history, starting with Mughal invasions, has always been in the hands of foreign people. Commenting on the role of an alternative mediascape made by institutions such as Jain Studios, Satyanarayan Maurya, a VHP activist and artist, stated: 'Now we feel that we want *our own* history . . . So what we want is to . . . change the media, too'.[7] The assumption behind this statement was that, as a story-telling tool, new media necessarily became integral to the process of remaking history.

In this context, all three videos portray Ayodhya as an ideal-typical site for the Hindu people's struggle to assert their 'primordial identity' against identity-threatening forces. The installation of secular governments after Independence, so the accusation underlying the scripts went, had not changed the precarious situation. On the contrary, it only emphasized the Hindus as people detached and alienated from their own history. Like a book with a forged text, written by a false author, history was now to be 're-written' in order to avoid further misinformation of the reader and to reconnect the readers with their 'authentic' narrative. Rohit M, filmmaker and RSS supporter, remarked:

> Right now this is a *confused identity.* The kind of secular identity which they [the British] have given, this kind of *gypsy identity* . . . The truth is that there was this *fault* in the history. This has been done to India, this has been done by the invaders and it has to be corrected. The history has to be corrected in that way [through the Ayodhya Movement]. At least people must know what was the *real* history. You must know your own personal identity: where do you belong to, what are you, and where are your roots.[8]

This quote suggests that the Indian people, like wanderers, or 'gypsies', in a dreamscape-flow of time, have been magically metamorphosed and forgotten their history and thus their origin. The Sangh Parivar's Ayodhya campaign, by pointing at the 'faults in the history', was to contribute to the awakening of the Hindu people by repositioning them in the 'correct' temporal flow and space. Here, 'wrong' history became the product of the brutal apparatuses of invasions and colonization, only to be challenged by the dedication, moral righteousness and pragmatism of leaders and the solidarity of their followers. So far, the 'Other's history' had been forced upon India. Now, the agency was to be reversed so that the Hindu people as her prime representatives could create their own master-narrative. Ramnath Ojha, the VHP consultant for *GMH*, explains with respect to the intention behind the video script: 'So what we

tried was that the history, religion and everything which we accept as truth—and the historical facts—should be produced and the public be enlightened so that it doesn't get misled'.[9]

How was this demonstrated on video? *GMH* is a video of which almost half is dedicated to the chronological narration of Hindu history, while the second half documents the historical event of the Ram *Shila Puja*. The way history is presented in the first part is by classifying the history of the subcontinent into four large units: ancient pre-invasion time, that is, the Hindu Golden Age defined as the mythic origin of the nation (*Hindu Rashtra*); Mughal invasion (sixteenth–eighteenth century); the period of colonial rule under the British (nineteenth–twentieth century), and the post-colonial era starting from 1947. This broad model of 'indigenous' history is, as we shall see in a short while, an adaptation of Indian history enhanced by indological and colonial ways of seeing. With the exception of the Hindu Golden Age, historical evolution is predominantly portrayed as the progress of catastrophes, crises and decline. A history in which, in Benjamin's *Theses on the Concept of History*, the angel of history 'relentlessly piles wreckage upon wreckage, and hurls them before his feet'.[10]

Making mythic history real

How could the above-described narrative of Hindu history be packaged in a credible way? The videos discussed here demonstrate that in Hindutva ideology, Ayodhya became a site in which time could be condensed to such an extent that history could be grasped as 'really happening', as 'now-being',[11] or what historian and anthropologist Greg Dening terms as 'teasing moments' filled with conflict and ambiguity.[12] Such a density was enhanced through the narration of history as a dynamic continuum arrested by halts. These standstills or ruptures were loaded with 'wish-images' that promised salvation in a utopian future, at the same time, remaining 'rooted in the mythical' (*Urpast*).[13]

I argue that the BJP in particular, at least in the years of high emotive mobilization of the Ayodhya campaign, could find in video technology an ideal stage to make myth and history 'really happen' and bring it close to the viewer. Magical realism and montage proved to be the best means to illustrate this antagonism. Through their aesthetic and linear structure, they made possible the condensation of time in the construction of moments of tension and clash. Further, they enabled an 'intensification of reality' in which the past was presented as a site of nostalgia to generate the viewer's desire to move towards the utopian society. The past was recalled into, and arrested onto, the temporal level of 'now-being'.

In the context of the Ayodhya controversy, the narration of the Hindu people's hi/story was one where myth and history coincide in the 'wish-images'

on display, be they Bharat Mata or Lord Ram. Their borders were blurred in such a way that myth seemed to evolve from history, and vice versa.[14] In *God Manifests Himself* myth and history came to serve as ideal devices for Hindutva ideologues to create and enhance their visions of social order and to gain political control, and to inscribe a historical narrative with something denied the possibility of human control by referring to mythic origin and fate in *Ram rajya*. At the same time, the capacity of human beings to impact upon and change the flow of history came to be emphasized. Broadly speaking, while myth could be aligned with subjects' experiences that they—and thus their fate—are (god-)made, history reversed the case by shifting the emphasis onto the subjects' involvement in the making of world and self.

In his exploration of the relationship between myth and history in the case of the Ayodhya controversy, Neeladri Bhattacharya makes the important point that it is not so much the question of 'true' and 'false' that should be asked in our tackling of historical facts versus mythic fiction. Rather, he states that because myths are perceived and credibly presented as 'true histories', they must not be dismissed: 'These are different modes of knowledge, varying ways of understanding the world, ordering one's life and defining one's actions. If myths convince people, we must understand why they do so . . . We must know why they circulate, why they play on popular imagination'.[15] Understanding 'Truth' as part of a representation process and thus, a discourse of power, the aesthetics and narratives of a selection of videos and the attempts to imbue them with meaning shall now be explored in more detail. What are the narrative and visual elements that form the argumentative 'plot' of a video such as *GMH* and how does it shape the 'pile of debris' of the Hindu Right's re-written history? What kind of action do these elements seek to sanction?

Mythic origins

In the first part of *GMH*, history is narrated through montage, often with crude cuts, and with rather poor-quality footage of the Mughal invasion (see Figures 31–36, Chapter 3). One montage forms the prototype for others in other videos, where the same chain of images appears repeatedly, occasionally in slightly modified ways.

The montage starts with animated pictures of the universe and galaxies of stars. From the depth of this cosmic silence appears a globe, slowly revolving around its own axis, a planet painted in a deep blue with light green spots moving steadily towards the viewer. The spots become continents and we can recognise the shape of the Indian subcontinent; in fact, it is more a map of Undivided India (*Akhand Bharat*) (Figures 60–61). A light appears, glowing as if it were a star rising up from the map of India. The voice-over commentary



Figure 60 Animated scene depicting the cosmic creation of the world. Still from *GMH*.

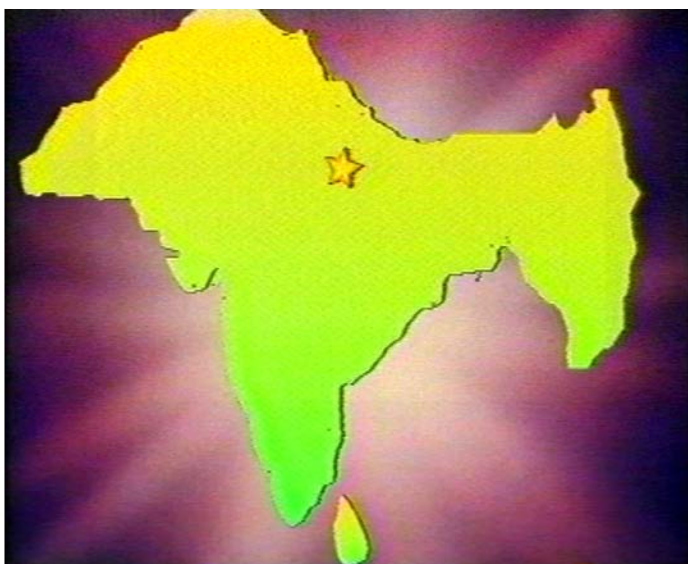


Figure 61 Shot depicting the sacredness of Ayodhya. Still from *GMH*.

narrates that 'this portion of the earth which was blessed by the universe and the cosmic forces and God, is called Bharat'. Highlighted on the map of India is Ayodhya, and the commentary continues, 'many salutations to that city! A city which is holy to all the religions and sects in India'. The mythical past has now been assigned an origin and a specific location within the somewhat



Figure 62 Illustration depicting Hindu warriors on the battlefield. Still from *GMH*.

empty space of the present. We find here a conscious reference to the cosmic creation of the world, to the Hindu concept of the universe as a materialization of Brahma's order, pinpointed by Richard Burghart as 'an auspicious sphere of light beyond which lie inauspicious areas of darkness'.[16] In Sanskrit scriptures, Ayodhya is defined as the spot from which the mythical king and creator god, Manu Vaivasvata, set out to shape the world universe.[17] Examining the depiction of Ayodhya during the Ramjanmabhoomi agitation in popular communal histories that were, for example, sold as 'guides' to pilgrims and supporters of the movement, similar interpretations have been noted by Bhattacharya: 'To create the cosmos, Manu needed a place to work. He brought Ayodhya from heaven and placed it on earth . . . Ayodhya is the source of origin of all the worlds'.[18]

This is an important link in the depiction of the Indian people as a chosen people, a people whose special features and territory have been favoured, chosen and sanctified by the gods. Philip Lutgendorf has explored the notion of history in popular literature that evolved in the context of the Ramjanmabhoomi campaign in terms of its mythic aspects. He argues that the Sanskrit concept of *itihasa* (history, lit. 'so it was'[19]), fuses 'Puranic mythologies with . . . modern schoolbook histories'[20] to enable social and political agents to present their agenda as part of a revivalist movement. It is interesting to note here that the concept challenges the western notion of 'progress' insofar as the improvement of the world 'must focus on recovery and restoration'[21] rather than a rejection of and a conscious break with the past in favour of linearity.

This montage scene marks the mythic beginning of history as a site of 'archaeological excavation'. With this term, cultural historian Aby Warburg sought to describe the process of a social group gaining collective consciousness about its past.[22] In the context of Hindutva's creation of *itihasa*, such a metaphor was to enhance a notion of eternal continuity and undisturbed harmony in a timeless setting, a Golden Age, presented like a forgotten goldmine. The quest for a mythic origin of the Hindu people derived from a strategy common to many forms of modern nationalism. It proved that, as Homi Bhabha explained, the space of the nation is never solely horizontal but enables the marriage of the archaic *and* the modern[23] without discrediting the one or the other. Myths of origin can be understood and projected as a source of power that appeals to the imagined community to engage in ideas of the continuity of lineage and energy to keep this flow of historical Indianness alive, as if history itself were speaking. Linked to a founding narrative, Ayodhya could thus be displayed in the light of an assumedly unchangeable order of peoplehood. The myth of Ayodhya also permitted Hindutva spokespeople to challenge interpretations raised by others (e.g., the secular state) who, for example, rejected the idea of primordial nationhood (*Hindu Rashtra*) and defined the Indian nation as solely the outcome of India's Independence in 1947.

Nation-building as an eternal battlefield

> *India has for thousands of years peacefully existed. . . . We, of all nations in the world, have never been a conquering race . . . and therefore we live.*[24]

The motif of the battle is one of the 'ribbons' that hold the depiction of Hindu history in the videos together. The first shift in the narrative of the montage on Indian history in *God Manifests Himself* comes as a rather abrupt rupture. As if the reels of a historical epic had been mistakenly exchanged with those of another film, the peaceful smiling of Lord Ram and the chanting of saints by the sacred riverside are followed by footage from pirated video copies, out of focus, depicting Mughal invaders. Moreover, not just the images but also the speed of their movement and the overlaid sound apparatus change from the first narrative section to the next. We can almost feel the trembling of the earth under the feet of galloping horses, accompanied by angry screaming and shouting, and the sound of gunfire. From this point, a chronology of battles evolves and we are taken into what is projected as the relentless struggle of Hindus against the expanding murderous forces of Islam. In front of our eyes emerges the heroic picture of a people that were, as the voice-over commentary explains, united on the cultural basis of Hinduness despite its division into countless communities and sects. We get the impression that it was an

unrecognised or 'veiled' unity. Different groups of Hindus are said to have been engaged in the effort to defend their motherland against those Mughal rulers who were out to destroy and weaken her. The history of the Ram temple is presented to us as the breeding ground for the76 battles that were fought since then, and for the martyrdom of an estimated 355,000 Hindus said to have given their lives selflessly in the course of the struggle to liberate the temple from its illegitimate 'occupation' by the Babri mosque (Chapter 6, Figure 62). The BJP's *White Paper on Ayodhya* refers to the struggles as 'military expeditions and war diplomacy'.[25]

To enhance the notion of martial fighting between Hindus and Muslims as 'real', and to give a visual body to the idea of struggle, Rahul T, the producer of the montage scene in *GMH*, employed different modes and genres of the visual. For example, Mughal miniature portraits of Muslim emperors like Aurangzeb or Jehangir are exhibited next to cartoon drawings of Hindu saints assembling to discuss resistance strategies against the invaders. Footage of invading hordes of Muslims is combined with docu-drama scenes staged especially for the video narrative. Rahul T (RT) explained the editing context:

> RT: Had we been equipped with a better quality of technicalities, I would have got better special effects and obviously better shootings, like the ones I got from different foreign films. Of course, I would have really loved to have maybe thousand horses, a big field, and maybe warriors! I would have *loved* to shoot that. Invasion scenes, I would have loved to do them! Of course, the budget was not available. That was something I had in mind when the script was still on; the whole impact of this *feeling* of how probably the invasions would have been in those kinds of times: with horses and elephants. And you would have these *huge* armies (he spreads his arms) from both sides. It would have been terrific.
>
> CB: Like *Ben Hur*?
>
> RT: Like *Ben Hur*. I have seen those movies and maybe those images have stuck in my mind because of this *massive* scale.[26]

From this statement we gather that Rahul T attempted to paint a picture of history, on the scale of those grand paintings of European Historicism or that of a Hollywood epic that overwhelms the spectator with martial pathos. Rahul T thought of recreating history as a chain of tales of heroic resistance to invasion. One docu-drama scene following the montage of battle depicts the story of a meeting between Queen Rajkumari, leader of an army of women soldiers, and Swami Maheshwaranand, head of *sadhu* forces, to discuss their joint war strategies against the Mughal armies. As Rahul T commented on the scene: 'they tried to find a solution to the Ayodhya problem . . . I used to

dream of a *Robin Hood* sequence, you know?!' In this scene, time is arrested so that bridges can be built to a 'now-time', to that known to the present. Rahul T's statements on the necessity to visualize history in order to translate a pathos-loaded nation finds clarification in an essay by Vilém Flusser. He argues that rather than seeing *history* as something that endows images with meaning, it is the *images* which make history by re/loading historical consciousness with magic and density, even though they might come across as 'documentary' or 'fact'.[27] History's images look out for 'photogenic' narratives, for example Robin Hood, or Ben Hur, or, as in the case of *GMH*, the *Ramlalla* and stories from mythological epics.

'Where a chain of events appears to us, he sees one single catastrophe which relentlessly piles wreckage upon wreckage, and hurls them before his feet', so Walter Benjamin reflects on 'Angelus Novus', the allegory of modernity as a catastrophe, as we could read in the introductory quote to this chapter. From this 'natural' flow of time, as it was evoked in the montaged video sequence of *GMH*, particular images emerge. They are imbued with concepts of history and cultural difference that evolved with European historiography and became tools of colonial ideology's rhetoric and practice.[28] Hindutva ideologues' commodification of the Mughal invasion as an era of battles marked by destruction and cultural decay finds parallels in the European historiographical construction of the Mughal Empires as a 'dark age of medievalism'[29] versus the 'glory of the *vedas*' (ancient Sanskrit scriptures[30]).

It is in this context of colonial historiography that a certain stereotypical image of 'the Muslim' begins to take shape. It provides the basis of communalist rhetoric in which Muslims are referred to as essentially bloodthirsty and aggressive foreign warriors, imbued with lust for looting, and piously believing that is their religious duty to convert and even kill *kaffirs* (non-believers).[31] In videos like *GMH*, the motif of invasion is exploited as a performative device through which the Hindu people can be staged as victims of foreign aggression, and as slaves of their own 'weakness', that is, their alleged tolerance. The stigma of tolerance, so the conclusion goes, kept them from changing the rules of power and from making history themselves.

The search for an 'indigenous' national history

> The storm (from Paradise) drives him irresistibly into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows toward the sky.

The general argument translated in *GMH* and *The Truth Shall Not Be Touched* is that outsiders have 'colonized' India's history, thereby pushing the Hindu people to the periphery. The Ayodhya campaign is displayed as a 'turning

point' of history insofar, the argument went, that the Hindu people had now begun to make 'their' history.[32]

The above-described video montage in *GMH* moves forward to the year of India's Independence from British colonial rule. We enter the second monolithic unit of history since the Golden Age: colonialism, or more precisely, the *end* of colonial rule. Colonialism is projected as another break in the continuity of the mythic history of India. Footage of one of the most popular collective icons of the young nation-state appears; supported by the sound of trumpets and victorious shouting we see both the hoisting of the new Indian National Flag and the pulling down of the British Empire's Union Jack over Delhi's Red Fort. Hindutva rhetoric often presents colonial history as a tool for the strategy of 'divide and rule'. In the process of being ruled by foreigners, especially the British Raj, the once united people of India were fragmented and divided through the colonialist elaboration of political and ethnic entities. These entities were pitted against each other in order to prevent them from joining against the British colonialists. K C Sudarshan, then senior RSS leader, states:

> When the English people wanted to divide this country, they thought that 'we can take records to create dissent amongst the different language groups, between the different castes, between the different creeds'. And they very cleverly tried to pick out all these differences. And they started with the very purpose that India is no nation at all . . . Though internally they had realised that it *is* a unity.[33]

This statement presents a commonly shared view on history within the Sangh Parivar: there is first the proposition that the concept of the Hindu nation as an enclosed entity based on territorial unity was ancient and indigenous but, however, ignored by the new foreign rulers. The second proposition found within this comment is that fragmentation and communal conflict had never been the part of the Hindu people's history: these problems were introduced with colonialism. Thus, the question of responsibility could be disavowed.

Yet, control over the colonized people was not only sought through the politics of 'divide and rule'. The introduction of foreign concepts of time affected everyday lives by means of the western calendrical system; colonial, royal and national holidays, or the rigid time frames of legislation and administration. All of these forms of symbolic capital implemented new regiments of power and control following rigid hierarchies and webs of classification between colonizer and colonized. While the colonizers were presented as masters of time and space, the colonized were stigmatized as timeless and displaced. Likewise, European scholarship considered the creation of a history of South Asia as their 'property' and 'project', stigmatizing Indians as 'people supposedly devoid of historical consciousness'.[34] Quoting Karl Marx, Edward Said refers

to this strategy as a central device of orientalist and colonialist practices: 'They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented.'[35]

However, the search for an 'indigenous' national history and 'voice', as well as the feeling of being deprived from the task of shaping one's own history, has been articulated by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, the Bengali author who laid the foundations for the career of Bharat Mata (Chapter 4) through the statement, '(w)e have no history: We must have a history!'[36]

But what kind of history was this? Historian Dipesh Chakrabarty gives a disillusioning view when he argues that, 'Indian history . . . remains a mimicry of a certain "modern" subject of "European" history and is bound to represent a sad figure of lack and failure. The transition narrative will always remain "grievously incomplete".'[37] For psychologist and social theorist Ashish Nandy too, the power to write history does not equal self-empowerment: 'The newly created sense of linear history in Hinduism—(was) an internalized counterpart of the Western theory of progress . . . It allowed one to project into history the sense of inferiority *vis-à-vis* an imperial faith and to see the golden age of Hinduism as an ancient version of the modern West.'[38] These quotes emphasize the assumption that despite the talk of 'indigenous' history, Hindutva history is a continuation of power discourses that evolved in the context of colonialism and modern nation building.

How are, according to Hindutva rhetoric, 'failed turning points of history' depicted and exploited for further persuasion in a video such as *GMH*? Footage of the flag-hoisting ceremony in *GMH* marks the end of colonial history, the end of hegemony through foreign rule and the beginning of post-colonial history. Yet, based upon the notion of *Hindu Rashtra* and *itihasa*, the video reflects the idea of a national *re*birth rather than the creation of a new nation; of history as a cycle that finally closes, joining the end of the present with the Golden Age of the past. In this light, Partition is depicted as the almost conspiratorial 'teamwork' of the hurriedly departing colonial rulers and power-struck Muslim representatives of the 'Two-Nation-Theory' against 'weak' Hindu politicians.[39] Partition was presented as yet another act of humiliation and weakening of the Hindu people. Correspondingly, the videos portray Hindus as being once again positioned on the side of the 'losers'. The voice-over commentary in *The Truth Shall Not Be Touched* elucidates:

> In 1947, if India wanted it, it could have declared itself to be the country of Hindus alone, a country of people who are not Muslims. But India did not betray its equal respect for all religions and beliefs. . . . and in the place of equal respect for all religions a new word was introduced—'secularism'. And the word 'secularism' was enshrined in the Indian constitution. After the English left India, the selfish policy of the new rulers continued to appease the Muslims.

By referring to Partition, Hindutva ideologues put forward their conclusion that the liberation of the Indian people was still incomplete because the politics of misrepresenting them continued even with the new secular state. Secularism was portrayed as a continuation of the creation of a history through which India was allegedly transformed into a 'dustbin of the West',[40] a 'site of wreckages' from past and present.

Hindutva ideologues camouflage their own claims for their project of rewriting-history by maintaining that Indians have been silent and voiceless for long enough. However, their 'learning how to speak' coincides with the silencing of others. The grammar and practice of their language on display in *God Manifests Himself* sounds very much like the master's voice, the appropriation of history equals the dispossessing of other histories. The final appeal of the voice-over commentary from *The Truth Shall Not Be Touched* has to be understood in this light:

> Oh countrymen, the decisive moment is at hand, and *you* have to decide: can we, in the name of secularism, continue with that suicidal policy which has already divided our sacred motherland in 1947, or should we, on the basis of national history, lay the foundation for a new brotherhood which has no place for appeasement for anyone . . . and which enshrines the dream of a new, powerful and strong India? . . . The question for today is: should we retain the mark of a foreign invader or should we restore our national pride?

The metaphor of society as a brotherhood, untouched by politics of appeasement, assembled in a boat that has to be steered across the river of destiny helped Hindutva ideologues suggest that solidarity and direction were necessary means of getting the boat of history to reach its safe harbour. The secular state, so claim of representatives of the Sangh Parivar, took this boat in the wrong direction, and even provoked its sinking. But there were other metaphors too, that enabled the dramatization of history as tool of self-empowerment.

The nation as temple—the secular state as prison

In order to grasp the potential that turned the movement into the platform of one of the key narratives in the history of post-colonial India, we have to return to the world of mythic history created in the Ayodhya videos. Two metaphors of antagonistic forces run throughout videos like *God Manifests Himself* and *The Truth Shall Not Be Touched*. One is that of the Hindutva nation as a temple. The other is of the nation-state as a prison.

Let us look once more at one particular scene in *God Manifests Himself* that visualizes the stated antagonism of the Hindutva-nation-as-temple and state-as-prison in ways affirming Benjamin's argument on the condensation of time as 'real' history. It is the miracle-scene of *Ramlalla*'s epiphany, depicting an alleged 'popular myth' that has come to serve as a key scene for Hindutva's revival in the 1980s. The scene is staged as docu-drama sequence. It is the episode of Lord Ram's appearance as a child behind the locked iron gates of the Babri mosque (see Figures 21–28, Chapter 3).[41] The mosque is defined as a symbol of Muslim aggression, as an illegitimate and provocative 'structure'. It is a reminder of both the Golden and Dark Age, the latter said to endure due to 'pseudo-secular' governance that provokes the Hindu people and indulges the Muslims. Opposed to this, the metaphor of the 'living temple' is enhanced in the portrayal of the godchild Ram (*Ramlalla*) who is said to have appeared at 'its' birthsite in December 1949. The epiphany is witnessed by a Muslim guard, who testifies to the 'miracle' in court. In fact, through the iron bars, the child smiles at the camera—one of the rare moments in which the separateness of worlds is cancelled. The metaphor of the nation-as-temple and of *deshbhakti* as passionate nationalism is also invoked in the speech of a saint in *God Manifests Himself* in which history and worldly agency as well as religious devotion are consciously fused: 'The construction of the temple, it will not just be outside us. It will be *inside* of us, a temple has to be built in *each* one of us!' As the 'wish-image' of *Ramlalla* is imbued with the idea of both the imprisonment and salvation of the Hindu people, the viewers become both prisoners and devotee-witnesses of the viewed. With this translation, Hindutva ideologues linked the liberation of Ram's birthplace to the liberation of the Hindu nation; while one holds the myth, the other hold history in their hands.

The insertion of such a moment of 'profane enlightenment' (Benjamin) or mythic clairvoyance into a court scene set in the present, is further contextualized in the miracle montage. Shortly before this key docu-drama scene starts, the viewer is taken back to the year of India's Independence. The voice-over commentary comments with pathos that, finally, 'India becomes *free*!' However, India's wounds were unable to heal because the temples allegedly destroyed by 'foreigners' were never reconstructed (with the exception of the Krishna temple at Somnath). India's wounded or tortured body and soul had thus to undergo further mutilations. At this point, where secular history is blamed for refusing to cure the tortured nation-body, a link to Ram's materalization is made in the commentary: 'In December 1949, the events took a strange and supernatural turn'. Then begins the above-described docu-drama scene. As if the gods finally took the nation's history into their hands, Ram appears. The constable describes how suddenly the locked doors were open and footage shows a lock lying on the ground. *Ramlalla* has disappeared

and instead, inside the mosque, Hindu devotees are chanting *bhajans* (devotional songs).[42] The Hindu nation has come to constitute itself as a living temple and moral fraternity within the mosque. Only by entering the body of the other, so it seems, could they restore their identity.

The narrative of *Ramlalla* is told in the context of loss and pain. Viewers familiar with the epic myth *Ramayana* know that the life of Ram is connected to the loss of his kingdom, his family, his years in exile with his wife Sita, the capturing of his wife by the demon-king Ravana, etc. The image of the imprisoned child is meant to evoke motherly feelings of protection and the desire for an emotional reunion with the child, as well as sympathy with the young god-king/national hero. The highly romanticized *bhakti* relationship between devotee and worshipped is increased in *The Truth Shall Not Be Touched* where the commentary claims Ram's voice, promising the spiritual unification and hence individual salvation of the devotee: 'This birthplace is very dear to me. If you bathe in this river [the sacred river Saryu], you will be at my side, you will have the right to be with me'. The voice is not the one of an equal but rather, as already discussed in previous chapters, that of a benign king talking to his people, with the people clearly positioned in a hierarchy of the faithful and dutiful subjects of a strong king whose mercy they depend on. In return for their absolute devotion and selfless service, the citizens of Ram's kingdom are promised to harvest his goodwill and profit from his power.

Turning history: creating 'truth' and difference

To attribute the Ayodhya controversy not just with 'the people's voice', but with a 'modern' face, the issue of Ram's liberation had to be transposed to another discourse. It was the discourse on the alleged innate rationality of the temple/mosque dispute. The discussion here is related to two strategies of establishing Hindutva as a credible player in the public discourse on Indianness. One is manifest in the act of challenging the government by presenting it with so-called 'evidence' on the disputed site. The other is the elaboration and construction of cultural difference through the affirmation of cultural difference in the polarized entities of 'Hindu sentiment' and 'Muslim psyche'.

Popular reality and evidence

> *People liked it very much! Actually, the reality was known to them by this video film. People were happy to see it, they were eager to know about the facts . . . We are faithful Hindus, so we wanted to know what actually happened there.*[43]

In the introductory scene of *The Truth Shall Not Be Touched,* J K Jain addresses the audience and refers to the video as the presentation of 'a few evidences'. This has to be understood as part of the attempt of the Sangh Parivar to re-write history by providing alleged 'evidences' in order to prove the legitimacy of their agenda. History was turned into a source of evidence production while the people's sentiment became the 'judge'.

The *Ramlalla* miracle was one such example through which previous secularist readings of the Ayodhya case were to be challenged. The reason given was, as we shall see, that evidence was directly related to the people's belief. Generally, evidence is meant to support the authority of claims made and arguments raised by a particular social group or individual. It is an essential part of constituting law and order in the jurisdiction of political movements and systems. In democracies, the idea of evidence allows any player in civil society to come forward with an argument, provided he or she can present the judge with credible evidence. In the case of the Ayodhya controversy, the roles were changed: the government was depicted as an illegitimate (because biased) Judge and thus became the Accused. The Sangh Parivar took over the role of the prosecutor while the people, according to *The Truth Shall Not Be Touched*, became the judge. Recall again the above appeal of the voice-over commentary: 'Oh countrymen, the decisive moment is at hand, and *you* have to decide . . . The question for today is: should we retain the mark of a foreign invader or should we restore our national pride?' The video media was the ideal means to display such questions and 'evidences' in a credible way.

One such 'evidence' is outlined in *GMH*. It is the power of the 'popular belief' of the Hindu people. What they believe, and feel, so goes the argument, has to be true. In this respect, Darvendra Swarup, professor of history and VHP and RSS activist, points out: 'The popular belief was there that this structure had been built on the site of an older temple'.[44] He refers to the miraculous epiphany of *Ramlalla* behind the locked iron gates of the Babri mosque in 1949, followed by the installation of a Ram idol in the mosque itself. Swarup, introducing himself as 'a man of history' in the interview, was not only one of the three selected 'experts' made up of historians and archaeologists, who presented their 'evidence' on the Ram temple on behalf of the VHP to a government committee in 1990–91. A VHP committee also recruited him to supervise the script as an expert historian and consultant in the case of both *God Manifests Himself* and *The Truth Shall Not Be Touched*. For Swarup, the situation was clear—there must be no doubts about the miracle of *Ramlalla* appearing behind the gates. He described the scene as if it was part of documentary footage:

> In the video *Bhaye Prakat Kripala* there was the *Ramlalla* behind the gate. We shot that *because it was there!!* It was there since 1949, it was in 1949,

> the 22nd, 23rd December '49, that Ramlalla appeared within that structure. Before that it was not there![45]

The marvellous epiphany of the god-child witnessed by the Muslim guard, as well as the installation of an idol thereafter, were seen as evidence for there being a temple. For Swarup, myth was undoubtedly history, and as such it was integrated in the chronicle of events presenting an 'indigenous' history. A secular court, so the argument went, could not judge such a matter—especially when the 'Hindu sentiment', or 'popular belief' provided sufficient credible evidence. Chandraprakash Dwiwedi, filmmaker and RSS sympathizer from Mumbai asked:

> What is the whole issue?! That millions of people in this country, for thousands of years they believe that this is the birthplace of Ram. No court can decide on this . . . You cannot debate this belief. Nobody can produce a birth certificate of Ram![46]

Linking religious belief to matters of tolerance, Ramesh K, the scriptwriter of *GMH* and *The Truth Shall Not Be Touched,* also drew his own conclusions:

> No Hindu opposes that Mary was giving birth to Jesus as a virgin . . . The hair of the Prophet is supposed to be here (Kashmir)—the Hindus haven't objected to that, too.[47]

The two videos came into existence at the crossroads of two different domains of knowledge transfer and authority, both of which seemed capable of producing 'evidence'. There was the strong emphasis on religious faith, or popular belief. Likewise, there was the effort to present the argument in a seemingly scientific and rational light based on the authority of the scriptures and their 'legitimate' Brahmanic eulogists.

Concerning the production of *God Manifests Himself,* the reference to the scriptures as a source of authority led to disagreements between 'expert consultants' and filmmaker. While the VHP experts imagined *GMH* to be a replica, or 'direct translation' of the scriptures' authority, Rahul T, responsible for the gathering of footage and editing, had the viewer in mind when considering the spectacle appeal of images and text. As a consequence, the ideas of the orthodox experts of scriptures clashed with those of the pragmatic maker of images. Rahul T said about the VHP consultants:

> I think they were very particular in that way. They were also quite knowledgeable . . . Talking to them, I would find them to be very disciplined in terms of their agenda, their thinking as such. And of course, each and every religion has their own kind of people who are like fundamentalists,

> who are like rule-makers, who speak by those rules . . . Whatever little dramatization that I did was all with reference to the historical books that had been given to me.[48]

One more criticism he had was that the consultants insisted on using Sanskritized Hindi in the video script. Rahul T found this a highly impracticable idea for the vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation were hardly known amongst members of lower classes and low castes. Swarup confirmed the relevance of the written word: 'Naturally, as far as choosing the material (for the videos) is concerned, we tried to go into all the books written on Ayodhya. You see, there is a lot of literature written on Ayodhya itself in Hindi.'[49] Suggesting that a written text would confirm the authority of 'popular belief' (versus 'secular belief'), he continued:

> And they [the books] have been giving very interesting stories which are already popular with the people. You simply show them on the screen. So all the popular stories are brought together . . . all the historical evidence has been brought together . . . But the popular belief was there that this structure has been built on the site of an older temple and about the existence of that temple there are stories and historical evidence is also available! . . . For the masses it is a miraculous evidence. For historians it is a fact that this miracle took place on one *particular* night: 22nd, 23rd December 1949. It was on this night that . . . this idol of *Ramlalla* appeared there. How it appeared, the contemporary record tells it.[50]

However, critics of the movement have argued that the 'miracle' was a fake. According to them, the idol of Ram had been installed by trespassers who broke into the mosque in that night of December 22–23, 1949.[51]

The image of *Ramlalla*'s appearance behind iron doors is replete with historical symbolism. It has to be seen in relation to the Congress government's move in 1955 to lock the doors of the complex, but to permit Hindus to perform *darshan* (worship) through an iron-barred gate. In the opinion of Hindutva ideologues, this was done only to please the Muslims[52] who protested against the fact that the idol was not removed.[53] In 1986, the gates were finally unlocked due to a verdict of a Faizabad district judge, in the presence of Rajiv Gandhi (an act presented to the whole nation through Doordarshan's camera-eyes). Yet, the 'liberation' was not complete and thus the image of *Ramlalla* behind the locked doors remained a powerful symbol in hands of the Sangh Parivar until December 1992.

The montaged condensing of history into a manufactured linear narrative that appears both logical and credible—thus 'real'—to its user is reminiscent of Michael Taussig's (1987) description of the depiction of history by one of

his American Indian informants who, according to Taussig, narrated 'his' hi/story in montage style. Stating the lack of any reference to 'schoolbook'-scientific time and space in the story-telling of his informant, Taussig found that assembled elements such as collective and personal memory, oral history and experience were given a subjective, credible order through the limitation of horizon via a selection of 'appropriate' components and a condensing of time in particular events.

In a similar move, as if they were personal histories rather than 'official' ones, the *langue* of the videos, despite the conventional retelling of history as a linear chronology of 'ancient', 'Mughal' and 'colonial' India, was that of a personal and intimate act of story-telling—behind which a calculating power machinery is hidden. The ways in which images of *Ramlalla* erupt within, and interrupt the flow of other images are reminders that the history of a nation can only enhance ideas of linear progress by dialectically referring back and forth, climbing up and down the ladder of time. The vitality of these mixed scenes is a reminder of the popular practice of *chitra kathas* (picture-storytelling), where storytellers traverse the country narrating a popular story painted on a scroll. Akin to those storytellers, the videos now narrated their history with an intimate and yet authoritative voice, which guided the viewer through the flow of images to ensure 'correct' interpretation in favour of the Ayodhya agitation.

Ritualizing the 'turn of history'

In order to mark the claimed historical turn that arose with the Ayodhya controversy as both legitimate and generally positive for the welfare of the nation, particular rituals were developed and staged. These were to show that Hindutva ideology and spokespeople promoted socially liberal and stabilizing principles of nation building.

The necessary turn of history, the attempt to define the Ayodhya campaign as a challenge to re-write the past, is marked in the second part of *GMH*. This documents the Ram *Shila Puja*, a ritual invented and staged by the BJP and the VHP (with support of the RSS) in Ayodhya in autumn 1989. The aim was to celebrate the consecration of hundreds of thousands of bricks collected from Ram-devotees and supporters of the movement not only from all over India but also from those countries hosting immigrant Hindu communities (UK, Germany, USA, Canada, South Africa, Mauritius and others), and to initiate the construction of the proposed Ram temple at the disputed site with those sanctified bricks (Figures 63–64).[54]

In 1989, the BJP had announced its full support of the VHP-led Ayodhya agitation. The party did so in order to give itself a narrative frame and a stage



Figure 63 *Ram Shila Puja*: Women stacking up piles of collected sacred bricks. Still from *GMH*.



Figure 64 Person carrying a sacred brick to the foundation stone laying ritual. Still from *GMH*.

for performance in public. The claimed agenda was to invoke India's 'assimilative cultural nationhood' (versus the 'spiritually bankrupt Western concept of secularism'[55]) and national integration (versus communal disharmony). Furthermore, the idea of caste-less and classless society became

a 'marketing strategy', promoting the idea of liberal Hindutva politics. One of the organizational and ideological premises of the RSS and the VHP in the 1980s was to address social groups that had so far been largely marginalized by political mobilization; that is, in particular Dalit and tribal groups (Chapter 2). By means of educational and developmental projects, these groups were persuaded to 're-'join the 'Hindu mainstream'. To expand its power, the BJP now increasingly drew upon networks and rhetoric elaborated by the other Sangh Parivar organizations. The party particularly promised these underprivileged segments of society—like all political players seeking support—better economic conditions and political representation. However, the promises granted by BJP politicians were, to a large extent, as hollow as those of other political parties, because the central motive behind the strategy was to secure votes for coming elections.

The self-proclaimed 'openness' of Hindutva and its definition as a caste-less and classless 'people's movement' that was to create a historical turning point in Indian politics is depicted in a scene in *God Manifests Himself*. Here, the first sacred brick meant to symbolize the foundation of the Ram temple during the Ram *Shila Puja* is laid by a Dalit. The voice-over comment states: 'As per declaration, the first brick will be laid by a Harijan friend. This proves that we are following the ideas of Ram'. Ram is thus turned into a revolutionary hero of all people alike, not just the Hindus. One should note at this stage, that in orthodox high-caste thought and practice, the Dalit, formerly stigmatized as 'untouchables', are perceived as both ritually polluted and polluting—a perception still ongoing to some extent. Thus, they are excluded from religious rituals performed by high-caste Hindus or temples others than their own. The Dalit laying the foundation stone, called by his full name, Kameshwar Chopal from Bihar, is referred to as 'Harijan' (child of god). This is a term used by Mohandas K Gandhi, who demanded respectful treatment (but not the abolition of the caste system as such) for the so-called out-castes. This example demonstrates that, by referring to both Lord Ram and Gandhi, the BJP attempted to position itself in a powerful symbolic mythic-historical lineage of alleged reformist and revivalist movements, however, reinterpreting myth and history according to its own elite and paternalist attitudes, needs and interests.

Accepting the authority of high-caste rituals the voice-over commentary explains, 'the Dalit salutes the gathering of saints, and receives their blessings'. The video footage does not pay much attention to Kameshwar Chopal but focuses instead on the faces of Sangh Parivar leaders as they bless themselves. The overall structure of this ritual thus remained elitist, while the Dalit had been successfully 'sanskritized'.[56] None of the 'newcomer' groups was granted its own history, mythology or religious belief and practices. On the contrary, in order to 'become visible' and join the historical event, they had to assimilate into the Hindutva 'mainstream', and by doing so, became invisible once again.

The main purpose behind this performance and its focus in *GMH* was to shape the people into what Homi Bhabha has called 'pedagogical objects and performative subjects'.[57] The purported 'people's movement' thus turned out to be just another disciplinary 'wish-image' in the total Hindutva narrative of rewriting history. Instead, the demonstration of the 'turning point of history' in the case of the foundation stone-laying ceremony became a 'ritual of possession',[58] that is, a site of cultural contact and performance that can, under specific circumstances, be turned into a hegemonic strategy of appropriation, discipline and control of Others. In this case, the Dalit was to become a part of the Hindu fold.

Challenging the nation-state with 'truth'

The Truth Shall Not Be Touched claims to put historical evidence before the Hindu people and asks them to judge themselves. How and why was this done? Almost paradoxically, the BJP attempted to exploit the Ayodhya controversy to present itself as credible secular actor, interested not in subverting, but in 'reforming' democracy. The BJP, particularly with support from the VHP, suggested that the government was hiding the 'truth' about the previous existence of a Ram temple from the citizens. By doing so, the government only tried to secure its own power and hinder the citizens' ability to take history's course into their hands. This, so the accusation went on, kept the nation from uniting peacefully, from understanding that the true purposes behind the Ayodhya agitation were about harmony and stability, not tension and fragmentation.

It is here that Jain Studios' videos come into play because they were said to fill this crucial 'information gap' by providing information about the Ramjanmabhoomi agitation, its history and agenda, to those who deserved and needed to know. Ajay S, an RSS worker and filmmaker at the Deendayal Research Institute said: 'J K Jain has documented and showed the reality about what was going on . . . Correct is just what the Jain Studios' film showed.'[59] A key song of *The Truth Shall Not Be Touched* narrates that, after the campaign failed to come to any resolution of the temple/mosque dispute, 'at this crucial juncture, we appeal to the law.' Presented as a judicial document, the video itself seems to be part of a court case that underlines the claim for legitimacy of the Ram temple with 'evidence'. In scene after scene, it displays the alleged proofs given in various historical and religious scriptures, revenue records and archaeological findings.[60] Furthermore, the voice-over commentary pretends to present the audience with unbiased information, and appeals to the viewers-as-jury to come to an 'independent' verdict. Nevertheless, the verdict is already inherent in the video. *The Truth Shall Not Be Touched* comes its final conclusion

that there had been a Ram temple which was destroyed to enable the construction of a mosque. The voice-over commentary states: 'According to the convictions and beliefs of Hindus, this *is* the birth-temple of Shri Ram, where worship has been offered from eternity'. The resolution given here is that in order to reinstate justice to the Hindu people, the temple had to be rebuilt at the same spot.

To understand the use of judiciary rhetoric, a brief look at the development of the Ayodhya controversy since *God Manifests Himself* was made in 1989 is useful. One year after the Ram *Shila Puja* took place, negotiations between the Sangh Parivar, the central government and representatives of Muslim groups had still been fruitless. The VHP stepped forward to challenge the government by expanding its frame of agency into the domain of jurisdiction. Since 1989, the Ayodhya controversy had enabled the BJP to widen its electoral-support base,[61] which required and enforced new pedagogic and performative strategies of mobilization. Sangh Parivar spokespeople and organizations in general had become more confident in appearing in the political sphere. There was shared consensus among Sangh Parivar members that the Ayodhya debate permitted them to act as a pressure-group that could employ diverse kinds of 'weaponry' against the government in power with more firmness and aggression.

After having shaped a narrative space into which myth and history could be condensed, Hindutva ideologues now turned to present this space as 'truth', and history as a weapon or 'medicine' for the victimized and weakened Hindu nation. In 1990, the dispute was handed from High Courts to the Supreme Court, where it has been pending since 1992. The meetings between representatives of the government, the VHP and the AIBMAC,[62] initiated to resolve the problem on a diplomatic basis, eventually failed. The chronology of events up to 1992 shows the central government becoming increasingly passive. While in 1989 and 1990, it tried to impose military forces against the *kar sevaks* in Ayodhya, 1992 (Narasimha Rao was prime minister at that time) was to a large extent marked by silence. This was also reflected in the behaviour of police and paramilitary forces, as shall be examined further below. And while the scope for governmental action seems to have declined, Hindu and Muslim groups continued their battle for representation and recognition (the Hindus by staging events like the Ram *Rath Yatra*, and the Muslim groups through demonstrations and strikes).

Some orthodox VHP members argued that no secular court, only religious experts, could decide on the fate of the disputed site. In their view, religious belief was privileged over empirical, scientific proof, and a separate jurisdiction for 'things religious' was required. The VHP proposed that the *dharma sansad* (Parliament of Dharmic Law), an assembly of *sadhus* (holy men) and *mahants* (leaders of religious orders), many of which were actively engaged in VHP politics, and who met regularly during the Ayodhya agitation to discuss event-management

and other issues, should be an alternative to the institutions of the secular state. But BJP pragmatists and some more moderate VHP supporters aimed at challenging the democratic jurisdiction by defending their case in secular court. Their attempt was to show that the discussion revolving around Ram's birthplace was *not* a predominantly religious matter, but of relevance for politics, and, above all, for the constitution of a harmonious nation-state.

On 7 November 1992, that is, a month before the demolition of the Babri mosque, mythic history became part of secularist reality. The miracle of the Ram idol was 'approved' by the institution of secular jurisdiction, in a move by Allahabad High Court which testified that Lord Rama was a 'constitutional entity and admittedly a reality of our national culture and fabric and not a myth . . . a source of inspiration for adopting the concept of secularism'.[63] Certainly welcoming this move in general, some members of the Sangh Parivar had thus to revise claims that a secular court could not interfere with religious, popular belief. However, this kind of revision would have been too difficult as it was based on familiar ideological territory and authorized the previously raised claim that Hindu sentiment and popular belief were evidences of a historical 'truth'.

Manipulating archaeological evidence

'Evidence' was also produced on the basis of archaeological findings (Figure 65). Yet, this gathering of scientific 'truth' about the past was just as ambiguous and dangerous as the arguments surrounding the stated authority of popular belief.



Figure 65 Archaeological 'evidences' recovered from the site of the demolished mosque. Still from *Ayodhya 1992*.

After the demolition of the mosque in 1992, representatives from within the Sangh Parivar, such as Swarup, stated that had the mosque *not* been destroyed in 1992, historians like Swarup and B B Lal, a renowned archaeologist from the Archaeological Survey of India, would not have discovered the archaeological 'evidence' and 'truth' authorizing the Sangh Parivar to uphold the claim for a reconstruction. In fact, Swarup claimed that 'the history of this country cannot be properly reconstructed without inscriptions which lie buried under these structures and monuments' (April *1998*).[64] The apparent objective and scientific character of his argument feeds into the demands of some VHP workers to demolish other mosques that have allegedly contributed to the history of Hindu humiliation by being built on destroyed temples. There have been debates on whether the archaeological evidence has been manipulated. One former employee of Jain Studios who had been involved in the making of *The Truth Shall Not Be Touched*, pointed out that he thought most of the 'findings' were parts of earlier excavations that had been moved to the site of destruction immediately after the *kar seva* in 1992. This would have been an easy task, given that the destruction of the mosque was pre-planned. Doubts about the 'evidences' were also raised by other agents, particularly from within the domain of archaeology. The first source is the study *Ayodhya. Archaeology After Demolition* in which emphasis was put on the fact that 'the evidence from archaeological findings which is being cited as proof of a temple at the site of what was the Babri Masjid, remains so far, both insubstantial and debatable'.[65] The second example came from the World Archaeology Congress (WAC) held in Croatia in 1998. The participating archaeologists passed a resolution condemning the demolition of the Babri mosque and the 'manipulation of archaeological evidence to justify destruction of or damage to historical structures'.[66] These examples indicate to what extent even 'scientific' evidence can fall victim to attempts to manipulate history, and that Ayodhya, as aforementioned, had become an archaeological excavation site in both a virtual (allegorical) and actual (physical) sense.

'Piles of wreckage': Hindu sentiment and Muslim aggression

The last section of this chapter explores how Hindutva spokespeople's agenda to rewrite history enhanced stereotypes on the basis of essentialized sentiments. The two videos discussed here demonstrate that the act of rewriting history as a strategy of self-empowerment was rooted in and helped shaped the need to construct an Other who allegedly forced the 'wrong' history upon the Hindu people. Furthermore, this 'Other' as history-making subject was held responsible for the growth of 'piles of wreckage' mentioned by Walter Benjamin, in that he compelled the Hindu people to engage and defend 'their' history in

one battle after another, thus slowing down, if not wholly interrupting their progress. The 'truth' value of the 'Hindu sentiment' further helped Hindutva spokespeople to discredit the 'Muslim sentiment' as basically untrue, in this case, as anti-national. Finally, it shall be argued that the stereotype of the 'aggressive Muslim' formed the backdrop that legitimized specific forms of political agency and communal violence, particularly during the Ayodhya controversy.

The temple/mosque dispute was the stage to set up a dichotomy based on the construction of what Hindutva agents came to call the 'Hindu sentiment' and 'Muslim psyche'. Even though we will see that they carry appeals of BJP leaders to Muslims to join the 'Hindu mainstream', the videos discussed here were meant to 'tickle' the emotions of their Hindu viewers and to mobilize them on the basis of this polarization. Ramesh K commented on the emotive effects of *The Truth Shall Not Be Touched*:

> This film was *so* strong. Wherever we showed this film people started to cry. Because it hurt their sentiment, their religious sentiment . . . Wherever people saw this film they cried, and pledged that they would vote for BJP, because BJP is the only party who can save our Bhagwan (god) Ram's temple.[67]

The focus on what is presented here as deep and sincere devotional dedication to Ram as both a religious and a national icon, produces a sharp and irreconcilable division between Hindus and Muslims by commodifying them as distinctively different and opposed ethnic communities. These are differences that were already shaped during the British Raj (to some extent as part of the practices of European historicism), and in the post-Nehruvian years. A video like *The Truth Shall Not Be Touched* could draw upon these understandings as a pragmatic means of appealing to the already established cognitive frames, and in the process, further dramatize the difference between Hindus and Muslims along ethno-political lines.

In the videos' condensing of events, a situation was constructed in which the only solution to the recovery of the Hindu sentiment and welfare of the nation seemed to be provided by the BJP. In the midst of the footage of battles and unity displayed in *God Manifests Himself*, in the appeals to memories of threat and glory, terror and Golden Age, we find this voice-over comment: 'In the coming elections we have to make only those victorious who keep the Hindu interest in mind. . . . In the coming elections you vote only for those who fight, speak up, and struggle for Hindu interests!' But how is the argument on the alleged ethnic difference of Hindus and Muslims constituted? At the core lies the making of a 'history of sentiments'.

The hurt 'Hindu sentiment'

In Chapter 2, Hinduness was discussed as *per se* peaceful and all-embracing due to its historical rootedness in *dharma* (moral righteousness and social order). In the Hindutva interpretation of history, the era of Mughal invasions came to be presented as the end of Hindu Rashtra's Golden Age. From the first quarter of the sixteenth century onwards, so the argument went, Hindus had been humiliated and weakened through forced conversion to Islam and oppression if they refused to convert. Despite this, tolerance and goodwill were said to have prevailed among the Hindu people. Nevertheless, the underlying message was that these attitudes were recognized neither by the secular government nor by Muslim groups. BJP party president Advani, in a speech presented in both *God Manifests Himself* and *The Truth Shall Not Be Touched,* explains: 'In India, we believe that everyone's sentiment should be respected. But in reality, Hindu sentiments are never respected. The meaning of secularism has come to mean the humiliation of Hindus'. The demand issued to the government to support Hindus by asking Muslims to hand over the Babri mosque became a test case for the recognition of the Hindu sentiment. As long as their sentiments and claims were ignored, the Hindus, so went the message of the videos, had legitimacy for becoming angry and defensive.

In the remedial discourse of Hindutva ideology, India's development is projected as depending on the assimilation of Muslims. The voice-over commentary in *The Truth Shall Not Be Touched* claims:

> If India shall be prosperous, then the people of India, the different religions, must respect each other's beliefs and sentiments. When this disputed structure is not a mosque at all, no one comes here to offer prayer, then why continue to repeat calling it a mosque and place obstacles in the task of reconstructing the temple? This can only bring damage to the country, and to the law and order and to the question of national sentiment!

The fact that no prayers were offered at the Babri mosque was taken as evidence that religious sentiment of the Muslims could not have been the reason for the refusal to hand over the mosque. On the contrary, it was argued that behind this excuse lay a tactic of conscious provocation and betrayal. The metaphor of the 'angry Hindu' employed by the Sangh Parivar is the complement to and the other side of the 'genuinely tolerant Hindu' and is explored in more detail in the following chapter. A pamphlet published by the RSS press Suruchi Prakashan, entitled *Angry Hindu? Yes, why not?!* (1988) carries the following passage:

> Yes, certainly I am angry. And I have every reason to be angry. And it is also right for me to be so. Otherwise I would be no man. Yes, for too long I have suffered affronts in silence . . . My temples have been desecrated, destroyed . . . My gods are crying. They are demanding . . . reinstatement in all their original glory . . . I was deceived, I was betrayed, I was stabbed in the back . . .[68]

Here, we find an identification of the Hindu people with their cultural and religious heritage as well as with the gendered nation-body (Chapters 2 and 4). Arising from the denial of recognition of the holistic concept of nationhood, the anger comes to be defined as the only legitimate way out of the identity crisis, and a means to defend and reinstate honour and pride. Thus the popularity of slogans on stickers or New Year cards published by Sangh Parivar presses, such as: 'Say, "we are proud to be Hindus"!'

Since diplomatic negotiations between Sangh Parivar, the government and organizations such as the AIBMAC, did not appear to lead to reconciliation on the basis of presenting credible evidences to prove claims on history, the conclusion was that the lineage of battles had to be continued. Yet, these breakdowns in negotiations partly suited those Hindutva spokespeople who favoured a more aggressive progress of the Ayodhya agitation. Violence is already in the air in the footage of *GMH* in which BJP leader and RSS ideologue Pramod Mahajan states provocatively:

> It has been said in the television and the papers that there will be blood, that blood will flow if the Ramjanmabhoomi is given to the Hindus. This is not a question of blood. The question is: Was Ram born in Ayodhya, or was Babar born in Ayodhya?! Whether or not blood flows, the temple will be built here.

For the sake of 'truth', violence may escalate in specific domains, first through words, then through event-management. In order to make such a rhetoric of defence and violence credible and effective, specific stereotypes of the Muslim were drawn upon and re-enforced.

The 'aggressive Muslim psyche'

How was the stereotype of the Muslim condensed in the videos' depiction of history? In *The Truth Shall Not Be Touched*, J K Jain addresses the viewer by saying that, 'it would be very good if all sections of the society would come together in the task of building the Ram temple. It would be especially good if Muslim brothers join our hands to build the temple'.

In order to affirm Hindu sentiment as well as themselves as 'truly Indian', Muslims were expected to show sympathy with and support the Sangh Parivar's agenda to re-write history according to the accounts given in *The Truth Shall Not Be Touched.* Instead of maintaining invaders' attitudes and practices, they were persuaded to engage in a process of assimilation according to the only 'indigenous' (Hindu) way of life. As mentioned above, the Ayodhya controversy was a 'test case' to challenge Muslim attitudes. If they were willing to hand over the Babri mosque, the symbol of ongoing Hindu humiliation and slavery, the Muslims could prove that they had learnt from history, and succumbed to the idea of 'welfare' to increase the progress of the nation. But if they were unwilling to remove the 'piles of wreckage' of the past, they had thereby chosen to remain anti-nationals and thus traitors. Besides the images included in the Mughal invasion montages, the only other footage of Muslims in Jain Studio videos is that of the guard witnessing the miracle and the blurred images of Muslim crowds leaving the Jama Masjid in Old Delhi after prayer (Figure 66).

Former Jain Studios' employee and filmmaker Matthew S, a Christian, argued that Muslims did not conform with the Indian mainstream: 'they have no patriotism towards India. 75 per cent don't. *Their* Mecca is Pakistan . . . This is not the right thing'. His opinion is based on a distinction between religion and national culture as parts of private and public domains respectively. Muslims, in his assumption, favoured religious loyalties over national duties. Part of practising national culture was to adhere to national holidays. Matthew S referred to his own life to highlight his distinction:

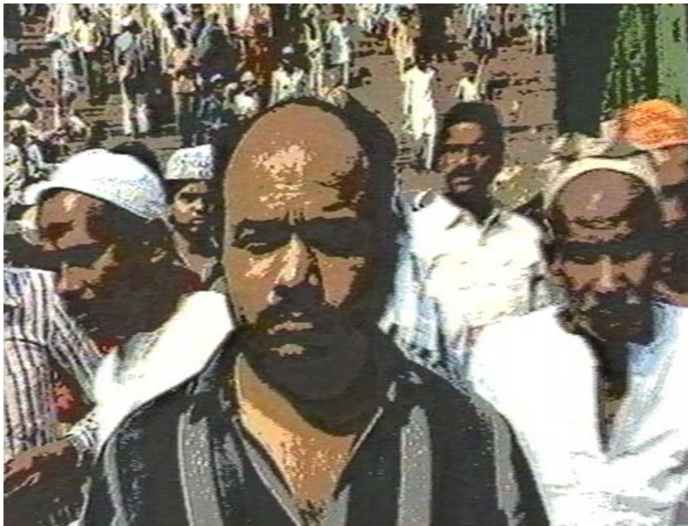


Figure 66 Muslims coming from their Friday prayer. Still from *GMH*.

> *I* am an Indian. *I* celebrate Diwali, Holi,[69] it's all part of the culture. A lot of things may become better if people assimilate! Culture and history is like a medicine. There is no other way! On August 15th it's Independence Day *and* Mother Mary Day, but we start the day with *Vande Mataram*. *This* is patriotism. *Why* are the Muslims different?! . . . They don't feel that this is their proper country.[70]

He then instantly related the alleged need of present-day Muslim assimilation to the Hindu mainstream to his version of Mughal invaders: 'these people did damage to Indian culture, no doubt. In a proper way: they have stolen our wealth, our culture, stealing the wealth and culture of India.'[71]

This association follows a pattern that is also promoted by Hindutva spokespeople, that of the hospitable Hindus opening their doors, while anti-national Muslims sell the family's goods through the back door and invite terrorists to enter. In *From the Sea . . .* (1990; Chapter 4), footage displays Sikander Bhakht, senior BJP leader and a Muslim, at a public meeting where he cynically remarks about the Muslims as an entity: 'These people sell their country, their religion, their everything'. VHP cartoons circulate in which the prototypical Muslim looks astonishingly similar to, and is manifest in narratives that also evolved around the Jew in Nazi propaganda. In one cartoon by the artist and VHP activist Satyanarayan Maurya, for example, a Muslim stabs the map of India while being spoon-fed by naïve secular politicians.[72] With the alleged attitude of favouring profit over patriotic values, Muslims could easily fall victim to financial and symbolic corruption and could thus be easily misled by fellow political power-players. The following quote from another speech by Sikander Bhakht in *The Truth Shall Not be Touched* has to be read in this context. He provocatively asks:

> What is so special about the Babri Masjid? The Babri Masjid is an excuse for confrontation. It's a political manoeuvre. Muslim people should understand this: A few political interests wanting to gain political mileage from this are doing this. Muslim friends should understand this that those who use the word of god for political interests, are selling religion, are selling god.

Hindutva spokespeople's demand for a re-making of history and their claim that the Ayodhya controversy was a 'turning point' of history, leaves Muslim agents little space for alternative manoeuvres. The Muslims had to conform to the ideal of *deshbhakti* and pay reverence to Ram and Bharat Mata as *national* icons. Premchand Jain, RSS worker and VHP representative said:

> (Muslims) have to be devoted to this country. That is the *only* requirement. If they love this country, then everything is all right . . . We are the most

> tolerant society in the whole world. We don't hate anybody because of religion.[73]

Yet, the catalogue of attributes leading to the stereotype of the Muslim as 'anti-national' is vast and expands into other domains of life too, with 'aggressiveness', 'intolerance', 'insincerity' and 'sexual lust (especially for Hindu women)' as the most common.

So far, I have explored the image of the 'profit-making Muslim'. The assumption that he would sell India to aliens allowed for the definition of Muslims as 'traitors'. However, the alienation was even further increased through the argument that Muslims had once been part of Hindu society's organism but were then converted during the Mughal period. They are thus both brother and traitor in one. RSS supporter Rohit M explained:

> They have drifted away from the Motherland. Only one per cent stems from the Middle East. All the others have been converted by the sword or money since more than 500 years . . . After Babur came conversion. The problem is: The Muslims don't see themselves as Hindus, that is, as Indians. We have failed to convince them that they are from amongst us. Ayodhya should be taken as (such) patriotic issue. As an exercise of that claim that Muslims should have demolished the mosque themselves, because it's a symbol of invasion, and because they have nothing to do with that. It's not their symbol. The mosque is a symbol of victory over India. Why should any Muslim take Babar as his ancestor? If they love this country, they should not destroy it.[74]

Darvendra Swarup, the VHP historian involved, for instance, in the script of *God Manifests Himself*, explicated similar relations and 'conditions' for, according to his view, a utopian future of peaceful relations between Hindus and Muslims:

> You see that the basic object of the Ayodhya Movement was that the present generation of Muslims should dissociate themselves from the medieval ideology of religious intolerance and vandalism. *They* are not responsible for it! . . . It was Babar, who was an invader. Should the followers of Babar take pride in his deeds?! They should know that national morals are the basics of the nation. The people must have patriotism. The second is that they must take pride in a common historical tradition. If Muslims of India do not take pride in pre-Islamic historical traditions of this country and heritage of this cultural civilisation and identification, how can a common nation be born? . . . Hindutva is only a symbolic name of a *long* continuity, a cultural continuity that flows in this country.[75]

Again, Ayodhya came to serve as a 'medium', not an aim, for social and political transformation, as a 'condensed site' that could make history 'really happen' (see above). The rhetoric twist in both arguments was that the Temple-Mosque controversy came to function as a catalyst that demanded from Muslims an admission that they had so far followed a 'wrong' history. Thus, they had neither remained true to themselves when they converted to Islam, nor were they now capable of 'return' to their origins by admitting their forged identity. In both Rohit M's as well as Darvendra Swarup's statement, the Muslims seem to have but one chance: to reject their previous history (which is depicted as being so distinctly different from 'the Hindu' history). How could such a 'positive metamorphosis' be demonstrated in the video media?

To gain an understanding of how the Hindutva argument of 'testing' sentiments found reflection in the two Jain Studios videos discussed in this chapter so far, let us return to the docu-drama scene of *God Manifests Himself* in which Abu'l Barakat, the Muslim guard on duty at the disputed site, describes his vision of *Ramlalla's* manifestation behind the locked gates of the mosque to the district magistrate K K Nayar in Faizabad. This scene is based on a rhetorical turn deriving from what is one of the key arguments within the Ayodhya controversy. It is no coincidence that the witness to that crucial moment in the history of the Ramjanmabhoomi Movement is a Muslim. The affection expressed and the respect paid by this figure towards Ram, and the legitimization of the miracle through the eyes and lips of a Muslim make this a key scene that sets up the icon of the 'good' Muslim overcome with Hindu sentiment.[76] He is on display as devotee of Ram, as someone who has finally found himself in the vision of Lord Ram.

Beyond the 'turning point of history'

This section explores the idea of re-writing history by means of the Ayodhya controversy during and after the demolition of the Babri mosque on 6 December 1992. The discussion touches upon the key issue of the violence related to the demolition, that is, the 'turning point of history' itself. It examines the ways in which the pulling down of the mosque, as well as the riots between Hindus and Muslims accompanying and following this act found reflection on video. Furthermore, it investigates how the events of December 1992 were received and reflected upon by various Hindutva spokespeople and informants. The first part of this section focuses on how *Ayodhya 6 December 1992* dealt with the demolition day itself. Who blamed whom for pulling down the mosque, that is, for making history violent? The second part then discusses notions and politics of ethnic, or communalist violence. The third section examines J K Jain and Rahul T's views on the alleged impact of Jain Studios videos on the 'turning point of history'.

Ayodhya 6 December 1992—*demolition day*

There is a sharp difference between the depiction of the Ramjanmabhoomi agitation and the videos, as parts of a peaceful agenda on the one hand, and the physical violence that marked the actual act and the aftermath of the Babri mosque demolition on the other. *Ayodhya 6 December 1992*, made shortly after the mosque's demolition, aims to present the viewer with answers to the rhetorical questions *What Happened? Who Did It? Why Was It Done?* Footage 'documents' how the *kar seva* started, showing 'participants' such as L K Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi, Pramod Mahajan and Ashok Singhal; and how the mosque was taken over and pulled down by *kar sevaks*. The general atmosphere is one of both critical enquiry and 'festivity', accompanied by *bhajans* and *puja,* a moment in celebration of the finally released 'Hindu awakening'. The video then continues to present various statements of Sangh Parivar leaders (some of whom are interviewed by J K Jain) and *kar sevaks* regarding the circumstances and justification of the demolition. Flashbacks present a brief chronology of events, filled with footage from interviews with 'ordinary' people in order to invoke the impression of the people's sentiment, or *volonté générale*.

Ayodhya 6 December 1992 tries to legitimize the destruction by splitting responsibilities. The video classifies two categories of participants: peaceful VHP representatives, *sadhus* and *kar sevaks*, on the one hand, and an anonymous angry mob of young men, on the other.[77] Yet, the borders between the two are blurred. The underlying argument that could evolve from this attempt to classify agency was that the general peaceful attitude of *kar sevaks* got out of control



Figure 67 Still from a scene documenting the demolition of the Babri mosque on December 6, 1992, from *Ayodhya 1992. . .*



Figure 68 Ibid.



Figure 69 Ibid.

because they could not bear the humiliation of their feelings any more and thus took it out into the public domain. The video shows an anonymous, enraged mob of 'angry Hindus' who, despite efforts of leaders and activists from within the Sangh Parivar to stop them, climb the domes of the mosque and start demolishing it (see Figures 67–68 and 72).

The question of blame has preoccupied all the agents involved in the Ayodhya controversy, and has been widely debated in public. The BJP refused



Figure 70 *Kar sevaks* on the central dome of the Babri mosque. Still from *Ayodhya 1992*.



Figure 71 Ibid.

to acknowledge that the demolition had been carefully planned, and that some of them had even been informed about the plan of demolition. First, angry young Hindu men from outside the realms of the Sangh Parivar were held responsible for stirring up trouble. Later, it had to be acknowledged that Bajrang Dalis were involved. Like previous *kar sevas*, this one, too, had been carefully planned. Even though the event of a *kar seva* cannot be identified with a riot, Paul Brass's study of communal riots in North India helps us to

understand that even though the *kar seva* of December 1992 might not have been intended to be violent, the chances that it ultimately did become a frenzied affray must have been calculated right from the beginning. Brass argues: 'Riots . . . are partly organized, partly spontaneous forms of collective action designed to appear or made to appear afterwards as spontaneous expressions of popular feeling'.[78] As Advani puts it in an interview in *Ayodhya 6 December 1992*, the violence that followed in cascades of riots between Hindus and Muslims was—put simply and bluntly—'unfortunate'. In ridiculing critics of the demolition by stigmatizing them as a 'handful' of people from the government, political parties and the English press, Advani created a dichotomy based on an alleged 'minority will' and 'majority will'. To him, the demolition was the manifestation of a long-awaited 'liberation' of the majority.[79] Furthermore, the government was blamed for being the driving-force behind the demolition as it was the politics of 'pseudo-secularism' that carried the main responsibility.

Like any other *kar seva*, this one was based on efficiently orchestrated recruitment of *kar sevaks* through the grass-root networks of the RSS (*shakhas*) and the Bajrang Dal. Shyam P, an RSS full-time worker, who was leader of a *shakha* at the time of the mosque's demolition, explained that for organizational means, leaders like himself had been told to stay behind to mobilize and control the departure of local *swayam sevaks* to Ayodhya. Shyam P emphasized that he had to make sure that no *kar sevak* left the town with a weapon, not elaborating on how it was possible to pursue such a task. He also explained that he and other *pracharaks* had been given Jain Studios videos on previous Ayodhya *kar sevas*. They had been asked to show them repeatedly to volunteers and sympathizers, and then pass them on to the next *shakha*.[80] The following quote from an interview with Mr Gupta, a teacher and *kar sevak* from Delhi, reflects the refusal of participants to acknowledge the effects of their 'work':

> We were instructed by our leader that all programmes must be peaceful. We had no weapon, not even a knife with us. And the *kar seva* was performed with the help of the police. Actually (he laughs) the police helped us very much! Without proper help of police and RSS people we could not be able to perform *kar seva* properly.[81]

The emphasis on police support is important. It demonstrates the ambiguous role played by local representatives of the state government. Meant to protect the mosque, policemen seem to have at first been overwhelmed and then paralysed by the approaching *kar sevaks*. However, footage of *Ayodhya 6 December 1992* depicts them as they take the side of the cheerful masses. The voice-over commentary from *GMH* explains: 'Saint or policeman, administrator or devotee, all were taken up with the emotion of the event. Everyone was chanting . . . Outside, there was difference, but inside, Ram was in everyone'.

In conversation, one Bajrang Dali, who had participated in the *kar seva* of 1992, told me that he and other members of 'Hanuman's Army' had been authorized to demolish the mosque by Lord Ram himself. He had also provided them with supernatural powers, for they did not carry any weapons or other tools. This statement also demonstrates the staging of a legitimization for violence as a sacred act devoted to and blessed by God. Yet, the demolition of the mosque must have been carefully arranged. A building of that size can otherwise not be demolished in the matter of just five hours. And despite the claims of 'spontaneous' outbreaks of violence, many of those who demolished the mosque must have been well-instructed in order to bring down such a large building without causing harm to compatriots: the demolition started on top of the central dome. After hoisting the Hindu flag, people began destroying the dome by removing the topmost brick.[82] The footage of *Ayodhya 6 December 1992* displays *kar sevaks* like bees in a beehive, standing on the domes of the Babri mosque and hitting the building's surface with hammers, axes and picks, thereby subverting the notion of a 'peaceful' movement (see Figures 70–72).

Playing out 'Hindu sentiment' versus 'Muslim psyche'

The Ayodhya campaign was accompanied and followed by ethno-political violence between Hindus and Muslims which had an intensity and nation-wide effect unprecedented in post-colonial India, with an escalation of violence



Figure 72 *Kar sevaks* starting to demolish the dome of the Babri mosque. Still from *Ayodhya 1992*.

on 6 December 1992 and the weeks following.[83] Hindutva spokespeople drew upon 'their' version of a history in progress in order to legitimize their claims and enhance stereotypes of the aggressive and anti-national Muslim. As a pressure group, the Sangh Parivar tried to consolidate Hindu communal sentiment, while Muslim spokespeople mobilized the Muslim minority, too each by referring to the broadest common denominator of both sameness and difference, that is, religious sentiment, associated with nationalist feelings. Furthermore, each promised its supporters economical and political advantages. Ready to be called upon in times of crisis, the stereotyping came in tandem with looting, intimidation, rape and killing.

In fact, the riots were mostly orchestrated by members of the political and religious Hindutva élite and tapped into the political and economical interests of a semi-urban and urban middle classes. This was reflected in the following quote by Ajay S, an RSS activist and developmental filmmaker who stated that: . . . those riots were not from rural area. This was a *fingertips person* who is from upper society. They create all this drama . . . People think, 'he's telling us the right thing because he's a big man. A big man and a politically rich man . . . must be right.' Then he can do anything.[84]

The use of the phrase 'fingertips person' suggests the idea that the organization of violence was often conducted by such agents who did not want to get physically involved but touched issues of bloody violence from the distance of their fingertips only. As to the Ayodhya issue, most of the riots happened in (semi-)urban areas where symbolic and economic competition have proved to be especially high.[85] The majority of Muslims in postcolonial India belong to the economically backward lower middle class. Through quota politics on the reservation of posts in public service and higher education, Muslims saw a chance of becoming socially and economically more mobile. However, this mobility of new social groups into and within the field of economic power was perceived as a threat to those who tried to protect their economic and political positions—mostly members of the upper castes and upper middle classes.

Ashis Nandy et al. call for an understanding of the riots as being located at the end of a chain 'of a century's effort to convert Hindus into a "proper" modern nation and a conventional ethnic majority . . . (and) corresponding efforts to turn the other faiths of the subcontinent into proper ethnic minorities and well-behaved nationalists'.[86] Similarly, scholars like Homi Bhabha, Sunil Khilnani and Arjun Appadurai[87] have discussed ethnic violence through the dynamics of modernity and globalization with respect to the role of the modern nation-state. These concepts have impacted upon, and enforced, mass migration and transnational flows of ideological concepts and economic capital. They have had a vital impact on the reasons why Hindutva politics engaged in the project of rewriting history.

I cannot further examine the question to what extent communities are politicized. Julia Eckert argues that violence is a means of participation and thus positioning in a movement (Eckert, 2003)on an ethnic basis here. But I suggest that the term 'ethnic violence' should be treated with care, since it alleges that aggression was essentially provided by and rooted in ethnic difference. This form of 'ethnic violence' should not be understood as a tension between two essentially different religious communities. Rather, it needs to be related to an ethnicization of religion and culture in the context of claims for more participation in, and access to, political and economic power by the particular groups engaging themselves in the discourse on Indianness. The term 'ethnic violence' is very much an ideological, symbolic tool, as much as national identities are constructed entities, staged by the political players negotiating and contesting power in this field of discourse.

Personal involvement in history-making—two cases

What happens when individual agents come to realize that their personal involvement in a particular event and/or social movement contributed to a 'turning point of history', one that in return impacted on their own lives, self-perceptions and notions of responsibility? More precisely, what role did the video media play in this relationship? In the following pages, Dr J K Jain, the owner of Jain Studios, and Rahul, a former filmmaker at Jain Studios, will be examined with respect to relating their actions, in this case, the production of Ayodhya videos, to the impact they may have had as mobilization tools, for example, on the creation of ethno-religious tensions between Hindus and Muslims in the country.

I was only an informer—J K Jain

In 1990–91, Jain was not only owner of the studios, but also a member of parliament (*Rajya Sabha*, Upper House). In this context, he was accused by fellow parliamentarians of profiting from the production and distribution of particular videos that were said to have encouraged communal violence. On the basis of his production of a video-chronology of the Ayodhya agitation, but particularly because of a video entitled *We Shall Give Up Our Lives . . .* (1990, see Chapter 6), Jain was accused of having exploited the emotive potential of the events in order to make economic profit. This was at the cost of those who suffered from the consequences of the controversy, that is, from the worst riots between Hindus and Muslims that had so far taken place in post-colonial India, preceding the pogroms and riots of 1992. In a special *Rajya Sabha* debate on the country's community situation, members of parliament

discussed the issue, some demanding a ban on the video, others J K Jain's punishment by law.

In the context of the parliamentary debate, J K Jain came to be attributed with the characteristics of a 'fire-tender',[88] or an *agent provocateur.* In my view, Jain can be seen as part of what Paul Brass calls an 'institutionalised riot system'.[89] That is, according to my reading, a network of jobs, personal interests and responsibilities, each more or less loosely tied to each other, but none of them bearing large burdens of moral responsibility. In this system of division of labour, Jain and his studios served as one such specialized agent paving the way for an atmosphere of revenge and hatred, though without openly claiming to do so. And Jain Studios, at least in the ways in which it was exploited by the Sangh Parivar, became a crucial link, or transmitter, in, to use Brass's words, a 'network of persons who maintain communal, racial, and other ethnic relations in a state of tension, or readiness for riots'.[90]

Even if this was not the intention of Jain, the Ayodhya videos were used for emotional mobilization of Hindus against Muslims, particularly in terms of electioneering. How did he react to the accusations? As a member of parliament, J K Jain appealed to the chairman to be allowed to defend himself on that issue. The protocol notes from the debate reveal that Jain's claim was based on what he called his 'civic duty to *inform*'. According to his view, he had only presented the public with plain and correct evidence. He was not prepared to carry any responsibility over whether peace or violence followed the consumption of this information by members of grassroots organizations, particularly, Bajrang Dalis. According to Jain, this was out of his sphere of influence and he explained:

> Many people made the point that the films made by Jain Studios had fuelled the fire, had caused riots. There was a directed delegation. I explained that was not the intention. These were the *information films . . . I'm the informer*. The informer has the *duty* to inform people what happened . . . people must be told that this injustice [the killing of *kar sevaks* in Ayodhya 1990] was done to the people . . . If truth hurts, then I should not be blamed for telling the truth.[91]

In this statement, Jain reduced the ideological context and possible mobilizing effects of his videos to 'neutral' and 'innocent' information; to 'raw material' that only gained its explosive power after it had left the studios and entered the large and anonymous circles of distribution and reception. This, so Jain argued in a personal interview, 'was a misinterpretation of my video'.[92]

Was Jain just naive and/or cold-bloodedly calculating? He was apparently convinced of both the value of his 'information' and his duty to present the public with a particular view on the 'truth'. In Chapter 2, we came to see that

he even placed the Hindutva agenda and his studios' tasks in the context of a revolutionary human rights movement opposing so-called inadequate governance. It seems almost a paradox that Jain's engagement in the creation of a diverse mediascape for the purpose of democratizing politics (Chapter 1) did not contradict the role of his studios and media software for a majoritarian, nativist movement. I do not want to engage in the question of whether Jain was entangled in a net of circumstances and contradictions that he was possibly not aware of. It would also be inadequate and illegitimate to judge a single person. Rather, I want to locate the points of departure and routes taken by an agent, the possibilities of choice and obligation s/he may be involved in.

The following quotes stem from the abovementioned parliamentary debate.[93] Through them, I intend to present Jain's attempt to shift the discussion on ethnic violence (result) to the debate on false governance (stated origin of the problem). Jain portrayed himself, and the BJP, as promoters and representatives of ethnic peace and harmony; even of humanity—a cliché familiar to us due to previous examinations of the 'Hindu sentiment'. The means (violence) may have been wrong, but since the aim (liberation and affirmation of Hindu mainstream) was righteous, sacrifices and compromises became a part of the bargain. During the debate Jain's speech was repeatedly interrupted by enraged members of parliament. Jain said about *We Can Give Up Our Lives . . .*

> Not a word in the cassette is against anybody, neither against Muslims nor against any other community (278–9) . . . I wish to condemn the communal violence which is a matter of shame for all of us . . . It was said by an honourable Member that I am a communalist. I owe an explanation. I am one of the younger, of the junior or new Members of this House, and I have the honour to present my credentials to the honourable Members of this House about my contributions to anti-communalism in this country. I am now referring to the 1984 riots in Delhi [anti-Sikh riots following Indira Gandhi's assassination] . . . Jain Medical Centre provided free service to the riot victims and, Sir, we and our party had risked the entire electoral State for the sake of defending Sikhs in the city of Delhi (418). . . Whether it is the Sikh or the Muslim, I have always fought for the civil liberties and human rights of the citizens in the country . . . everybody knows that people who died in Malyana [a riot-hit place in North India] happened to be Muslims. I was one of those who went to Malyana; who made a documentation on the atrocities committed on the Muslims, *not* because they were Muslims, but because they were *Indians*. We do not discriminate between the people of this country, whether one is a Hindu or a Muslim or a Sikh. We see them as Indian. We are opposed to preferential treatment to anybody; but we respect all

> (426). . . It is the belief of our party that the debate today is *not* on Hindus versus Muslim (431).

The conclusion was that since respect was the foundation of Hindutva ideology and politics, the responsibility for any involvement in riot-organization had to be rejected for reasons of credibility. To challenge the perception of his role in the communal riots, Jain turned the argument about his and the BJP's moral responsibility into one in which the parliament itself came to be blamed for its 'undemocratic' attitudes. Likewise, the government was accused of increasing the tension on the basis of misrepresentation and unjust treatment of different groups of Indian citizens. Jain even projected himself and the party as the sole rational and fair players in the whole discourse—despite their transformation into the scapegoats of the 'pseudo-secular' state:

> I am not complaining because like others *I am one of those many unfortunate, innocent victims of the communal violence*. I am in front of you being victimised by your political thoughts (426) [author's emphasis]. The debate today is nationalism versus pseudo-secularism which has put the country at the present juncture. The ideological perceptions of what is secularism need to be debated (431).

Jain further dissociated himself from the accusation of having financially profited from the sale of video cassettes such as *We Can Give Up Our Lives . . .* by referring to the anarchic black market of video pirates and libraries. These, according to him, were the ones who profited from the sale of allegedly 'millions of copies' of this cassette. With this argument, Jain shifted the allegations with respect to his profiting from video sales.

In conclusion one can say that by aligning his engagement in the production of videos to the domain of humanitarian activities and elevation of 'the Indian people', as indicated in the two quotes above, J K Jain attempted to sideline accusations with regard to ethno-political mobilization and conflict. Furthermore, by depicting himself (and the BJP) as victim of 'pseudo-secularist' discrimination, he reversed the question of responsibility and blamed the government instead for being the prime source of conflict.

A touch of history—Rahul T

Let us now take a take a look at Rahul T, who directed and edited *God Manifests Himself* and other Jain Studios videos. The link between mastery over creation and self-consciousness is reflected in the following statement by Rahul T (RT) concerning his involvement in the production of *GMH* where he exploited the technique of docu-drama to relate the video to the historical world, and to

translate an invisible, imaginary world as if it was part of a documentary film:

> CB: As a cameraman [documenting the Ayodhya Movement at several stages], what did you feel? How did you see your role? Did you see yourself as someone who was witnessing history of something that had to be told to the people?
>
> RT: Hmm. I mean, since I had actually gone back to the history as well, probably you're right, I was trying almost like re-collecting the history. Like in the past, how people have been killed for that particular episode, the fight between a mosque and a temple. . . . Up till now there was no life-documentation. I was really trying to document this well. This (killing) must have happened in the past as well, certainly! If this is happening in the twentieth century, this must have happened in the past. And much more bloodier than this. I really had those things in mind. It was really touching my emotions.[94]

Wanting to know what one's past could have been like; the desire to give a face to something that has been visually so far invisible and distant; and the notion of the past as a secret that could reveal both stories of horror and glory; these were some of the forces behind Rahul T's involvement during the making of *GMH*. The use of the word 'touching', similar to Ramanand Sagar's notion of 'tickling' the mind (Chapter 3)—whether Rahul T employed it consciously or unconsciously—revealed another dimension of history-making as part of an identification process. One feels touched, addressed and recognized, something that seems to come from the single visual or the chain of visuals itself. This shows the dialectic and reciprocity of making history: Rahul T both created and was created, his narratives and images both revealed as much as they were unveiled. The example also proves that history is a 'sensuous human activity'[95] making and unmaking ways of seeing. With the help of video technology, Rahul T was able to present to the viewer an image of the world as if it was revealed for the first time.

The act of making history by imagining how it 'must have happened', has to be understood as part of an identification process. Of his footage in *God Manifests Himself* where pilgrims chanting devotional songs are shown in connection to the unlocking of the gates of the mosque in 1949, Rahul T commented: 'I was the cameraman of the film . . . When I took the shots I was really sensing the person's deep involvement in doing the *puja* (worship) . . . These were the shots that made me so involved'.[96] And he said that, in the course of his video-work for the Ayodhya Movement, he realized what it meant to be a Hindu, someone who finally stood up to self-empowerment and constituted a community through narrating and creating 'his' hi/story.

Rahul T's fascination with images and video technology's ability to recreate history and his associations of the nation's imagined grandeur with the narratives of Ben Hur and Robin Hood, was mentioned above. This fascination corresponded with his view that visuals could carry and transmit certain 'energies', and stimulate 'primordial' visions of the Hindu nation's mythic origin. According to Rahul T, *God Manifests Himself* was a video on both religious sentiment and the self-empowerment of Hindus. In conversation, he distanced himself from the use of the videos as tools of Hindutva ideology and politics. He admitted that he did not realize that a transfer from the religious into the political one into another domain could have been intended by Hindutva spokespeople, nor that it came to be effective in terms of emotive mobilization. The ambiguity inherent in *GMH*, the gap between production and reading, made Rahul T retrospectively attribute the video with the term 'bitch nature':

> I don't think that I was really involved with their [Hindutva] ideology, because I never believed in that. Of course, I always thought, I am an Indian at the most, I mean, I knew I was a Hindu . . . I don't know, I didn't really realize that this is going to really create such a big, big bang in society. I really thought that I'm just trying to visualize history in terms of the job that was given to me . . . You see, when I made this film, I never realized that the situation was going to be so critical. I never realized that when I made these initial films . . . I was trying to create a history of what the whole incident was exactly all about. How did this whole Ayodhya thing came into the picture?! That was something I never thought of—that finally all the political parties would try to make an issue out of it. I think I was never worried about their *bitch nature* . . . I was not really thinking in those terms that a person [refers to J K Jain] has xyz backgrounds, and if a person has something to do with this issue, that he's not really working towards the interest of the people. Instead, all the time I was thinking 'why can this particular Hindu religion which is a *good* aspect in a religion, not be exploited?'[97]

For Rahul T, *GMH* existed in a domain safely isolated from mundane political concerns and practices. This relates to J K Jain's above commentary on the difference between his intention to provide the people with 'the truth', and the interpretations and consequences drawn from that 'information' by viewers themselves. Defining the circulation and reception of videos as 'out of control', it seems as if Rahul T did not think of consequences, while J K Jain defined the audiences alone as responsible. Although Rahul T did not feel comfortable with the ideological background and the political exploitation of the video, he felt proud that *his* video had an effect on people and the history

of the nation-state: 'Until the time this film was made, people were not aware of what Ayodhya is all about . . . I never thought that this film could make it (the Ramjanmabhoomi issue) into such a big dynamite thing'.[98] Sensing the power of aesthetics and images as economic capital and social forces had led to Rahul T's shift from being a painter to audiovisual media wizard. Saying that at that time he had been 'madly in love with the project', he continued:

> Even today, when I look at it, I really feel that 'Wow!', I don't know how I was able to do it, I still feel this! . . . I don't know what was motivating me at that time to make it. That is something to be really thought about, what made myself feel like that. I think that motivation is something that a man feels when he wants to do something in life . . . something for the cause, for the betterment of society. [99]

Rahul T also highlighted the enthusiastic engagement in the video production. According to him, it made both consultants and Jain Studios employees equally devoted to the medium, as if through the emotive engagement in the act of rewriting history in the video media, the vision of Hindu empowerment had made itself manifest: 'I think it's the sheer involvement that also made them freaky, they liked it, they enjoyed it also'.

Admitting that he never consciously reflected upon the possibilities of exploiting the issues and images presented in the videos, Rahul T subtly emphasizes that doubts existed, yet they had come second to duty:

> At that time [c. 1992], I started realizing: have I done the right thing or not? Then you start looking at it in a different way, because, see—at that point, I was thinking that this is my job . . . I ultimately left it [script-making] to them, because I didn't want to make them [Sangh Parivar spokespeople] unhappy, you know. In terms of the script, they were the better judge.[100]

When research for this study was conducted, Rahul T had taken up work with a private news channel in Delhi. He told me that because of Jain Studios' bad reputation in the context of communalist activities, he did not mention his employment at Jain Studios in job applications.

If we recall Rahul T's statement about the thrill of having the power to 'visualize' and even 'make history' in the respective Jain Studios' videos, a certain amount of political blindness can be stated with reference to the overall effects of this 'turning point in history'. Maybe the anonymity and the power of the 'man behind the camera' provided him with a distance from the ideological implications of his videos, and hence served as an excuse for his withdrawal from responsibility. However, it seems unlikely that Rahul T was

unaware of the ideological and political implications of Hindutva rhetoric, and videos as part and parcel of it, given the information material he got from VHP consultants, and the political rituals and their violent aftermath that he either witnessed personally as cameraman at the spot, or heard and read of subsequently. While Rahul T documented the *kar seva* in Ayodhya in 1990, for example, abusive speeches against Muslims were staged at huge meetings outside a temple every day. Furthermore, he must have heard of the simultaneous attacks on homes and properties of Muslims in that area.[101] Most of all, the narratives he visualized were quite openly encouraging conflict by confining the history of the Hindu people's liberation struggle to the confrontation with Muslims in battle after battle, and particularly by making the disputed site a test case of Muslim loyalty. And *God Manifests Himself* reflects the movement's main emotive force behind its argument, which is confrontation and conflict.

What Rahul T wanted the viewers to see, was the energy and confidence underlying particular events—whether in the case of the Ayodhya controversy, where a video like *GMH* depicted a social movement that had lifted itself up from a history as a 'pile of wreckages'. Or whether it was the atomic tests conducted under the recent BJP-led coalition government in 1998. Both events, according to the filmmaker, were parts of national self-empowerment from what he perceived as the inadequate 'backwardness' of the Indian nation. Rahul T remarked on the effects of the atomic tests (on a national and international level):

> People would have otherwise still thought that India is a tribe, that India is still a jungle, that India is still in the middle ages. I really think we should have done the explosion long time back. Why have we waited for so long?![102]

Inherent in this remark is the belief that such events could lead to another turning point in history, thereby enabling 'India' to transgress her imprisonment in stereotypes of backwardness and misrepresentation, no matter what other risks may accompany the event.[103]

J K Jain and Rahul T walked a thin line drawn between the denial of responsibilities, political calculation, and personal interest. Their views about the videos varied according to their individual positions in the field of cultural production. However, both were aware of video's emotive potential at that particular moment of political mobilization. J K Jain's views revolved around political negotiations about the public role of videos and the 'duty to inform' (Chapter 2), while Rahul T's statements respond to the alleged power of images on a more aesthetic and personal level of emphatic involvement. Both agents sidelined personal responsibilities by disconnecting the 'intimate'

sphere of production ('welfare of the people') from the anonymous, public sphere of distribution, staging and reception videos.

'Wrong place and wrong time': historical turning points

Retrospectively, several informants reacted positively to the overall agenda of the Ayodhya agitation. From this perspective, it seems as if the violence that had occurred in Hindu/Muslim riots and other communal tensions, was, in party hardliner L K Advani's words, 'unfortunate', that is, a non-representative 'slippage'.

Former Jain Studios employee Matthew S argued that, despite communal tensions, those years of mobilization and event-management had been crucial in that they had basically come to unite the Indian people and reaffirm Hindu culture as a mainstream identity-marker: 'It was an effort to teach the people of India'. And he adds: 'But the place and the moment were wrong'. Matthew S disliked the idea of exploiting religion for the purpose of constituting nationalism. He also disagreed with the use of the movement as an electoral tool by the BJP. By doing so, according to him, the BJP, 'went one step too far ahead, they only looked for power . . . It was absolutely politically motivated'. Pinpointing the problem, he subtly revealed that the Ramjanmabhoomi campaign was clearly a Hindu event, but that 'the moment of patriotism of the culture of India should have been chosen properly so *all* communities could identify'. As such, for him the Ayodhya controversy had become a declaration of Hindu reassertion and chauvinism, catering solely to the interests of the Hindu majority. In Matthew S's opinion, as a national party, the BJP had to prove that they were a party of *all* Indians alike. Thus 'they have to start using different tactics in politics—they *have* to do that, otherwise they will not win, just with one issue they are not going to survive in this country!'[104]

The object of aggression, the visualization of the 'turning point of history', that is, the mosque, has disappeared. A makeshift temple was erected at the site of the alleged birthplace, and with it, the 'object of provocation' (Advani), the evidence of 'false history', has gone missing (see Figure 73). The then BJP party president Advani said: 'it is true that so long as this particular structure was there, it was a provocation. That provocation is no longer there.'[105] Likewise, party spokespeople themselves have come to realize that dealing with religion and religious organizations such as the VHP, especially the Bajrang Dal, had been quite harmful in the context of promoting a democratic and secular image, and that the orchestration of various organizations carried many unpredictable side-effects and risks. Furthermore, heavy international critique denoting the BJP as fundamentalists and religious fanatics may have contributed to the preliminary 'taming' of the party.



Figure 73 Guarded makeshift temple. Still from *Ayodhya 1992*.

Equally, the RSS has learned that highly emotional and performative events like the Ayodhya movement do not necessarily guarantee long-lasting enthusiasm amongst *shakha* members. Joshi, an RSS full-time worker, explained that performance ensured participation and support only temporarily. Pedagogy was privileged as being more substantial in the bonding of people and the formation of Hindutva-based loyalties, and nativist histories.

Has the lesson of remaking history for Muslims been learnt in the eyes of the Sangh Parivar? In 1998, the BJP was in power at the centre, even if in a coalition government. It has come to stage itself as a global player that even sympathizes with the former arch-enemy, the USA. But mutual agreements seemed necessary, said Rohit M, foreseeing a clash of cultures on the basis of religious difference:

> Ultimately, in the entire world scenario, you are going to have a clash between the identities . . . In the present scenario, and in the coming scenario, I feel the next polarisation is going to be a pan-Islamic thing against the rest of the world . . . If you have a common enemy, you ought to be friends.[106]

At the time of finishing off this manuscript, and in the light of the USA seeking solidarity with and support from other nations in order to 'combat Islamicist terrorism', this statement seems to carry a somewhat eerie undertone of self-fulfilling prophecy. In the context of the Ramjanmabhoomi agitation, and ongoing disputes around the question of archaeological evidence, which was taken up again in 2003, when the Archaeological Survey of India presented a report that claimed to be able to 'prove' the previous existence of a temple at

the site of the demolished mosque, Ayodhya still provides raw material for the script of nationality. Regarding the Atomic tests of 1998 and the escalation of the Kashmir conflict, the quote also demonstrates an ongoing process of piling 'wreckage upon wreckage' in order to create a utopia of progress, even though issues and acts of positioning may change.

6

MOTHER INDIA'S HEROIC SONS: A PASSION-PLAY OF MARTYRDOM

> A Hindu who fights for his country and dies is as much a Hindu martyr in the religious sense as one who fights for his temples. . . . For the Hindus every inch of their land is divine. . . . Every inch of our land is sacred and so are the rivers and the mountains. . . . To fight for the motherland is therefore the same as fighting for the *vedas* [sacred texts] or for the temples. . . . In that way the Hindus can never be really secular in the Western sense. . . . There is no such thing as a secular Hindu . . . that is why Hindus do not differentiate between religious martyrs and secular martyrs. . . . There can be no Gods without the land, and there can be no land without the Gods. . . . Therefore, those who are fighting for a temple at Ayodhya are as much political Hindus as those who are laying down their lives for Kashmir. . . . To me the struggle for Ayodhya is not a religious struggle. It is as political a struggle as the struggle in Kashmir.[1]

> Our specialness lies in the fact that we have been a nation for eternity, and although enemies have come and gone, they have not been able to touch our culture and nation, we have remained India and Indian . . . Walking on the path of truth is the pride of our country. We cast aside untruth. This is our pride . . . It is for the sake of our truth that our heroes have been martyred.[2]

On 30 October and 2 November 1990, *kar sevaks* gathered in Ayodhya to celebrate a flag-hoisting ritual that was part of the so-called 'struggle for the liberation of Ram's birthplace' and the conquest of the Babri mosque. They had also come to protest against L K Advani's arrest in Bihar on 23 October while conducting his Ram *Rath Yatra* through the Hindi belt. The Indian government, with support of the state governments of Uttar Pradesh and neighbouring Bihar, had placed a ban on the assembly, stationed 18,000 troops in Ayodhya and arrested thousands of supporters before they could even reach the town.[3] Both arrest and ban had resulted from Advani's announcement

that, in Jaffrelot's words, 'the BJP would withdraw its support from V P Singh's government if the latter placed a prohibition on the building of the temple, and . . . that early elections be held'.[4] Despite the ban and arrests, more than 40,000 *kar sevaks* entered the city[5] and assembled for the flag hoisting, chanting and shouting victorious slogans. The situation became out of control when some of the *kar sevaks* started to climb over the fence separating them from the mosque. Police and paramilitary security forces first started firing tear-gas but then switched to using guns.[6] Violent clashes between the government forces and *kar sevaks* led to the killings of civilians. The number of dead is still debated and ranges from a few hundred (according to Sangh Parivar sources) to less than a dozen (government sources).[7] The killings, referred to by Hindutva spokespeople as a 'massacre' and part of an ongoing 'genocide' against Hindus, brought the Ayodhya controversy new popularity among supporters. Furthermore, it provided potential for new recruits to join Sangh Parivar's 'battle' against the alleged pseudo-secular forces of the Indian government.

I shall discuss the figure of the martyr as an important element within Hindutva representations, and as another 'wish-image' that combines diverse concepts of social agency for the purpose of mobilization. Crucial to the argument developed in this chapter is that the exploitation of the idea of heroic martyrdom mirrors Hindutva ideologues' attempt to claim access to, and amalgamate the national subject's internal being and familial loyalties. Based on the rhetoric of martyrdom as a unifying force between various 'members' of the Hindu family, the figure of the *kar sevak* could be displayed, and juxtaposed to other models of agency, as an essentially innocent and passive agent.

The videos discussed below served the purpose of displaying the martyrdom narrative in public. In them, the *kar sevaks* were said to have died willingly, to have voluntarily chosen self-sacrifice and martyrdom for the national welfare. However, it is highly questionable that this was the case. Rather, the dead were transformed into martyrs post mortem. Their death was packaged as a pathos-filled rhetoric of the Hindu people's suffering, intended be used as a performative and pedagogical marketing tool that allowed the Sangh Parivar to spread the idea of sacrifice as a national duty; and to create a cult of martyrdom. In this context, Hindutva leaders remained untouched by the obligation to sacrifice themselves, even though references are repeatedly made about their willingness to give their lives. Instead, it was the anonymous masses who were to convert the idea of a dedicated movement into political practice and to 'give (their) life' to the metaphor of martyrdom. Because of this clear hierarchization and instrumentalization, I will refer to them as 'underdog martyrs'.

In this context, the relevance of and interests behind the construction of a cult of martyrdom will be discussed as it became translated and presented in a selection of three Jain Studios videos that were produced at various stages in

the chronology of the Sangh Parivar's Ayodhya agitation between 1989 and 1992. The first video discussed here is *God Manifests Himself* (*GMH*, 1990). It anchors the Ayodhya movement in the mythical lineage of sacred battles and paves the way for a narrative of the stated martyrdom of the Hindu people. In their interpretation as alienated and oppressed people, their fate is indirectly linked to the suffering of Jews in ancient Egypt or the Christians under the Roman Empire. Depicting another battle in the whole chain of conflicts narrated in *GMH*, the next video, *We Can Give Up Our Lives But We Cannot Break Our Vow* (*Pran jaye par Vachan na jaye*, 1990, Hindi; hereafter, *We Can Give Up Our Lives. . .*), displays at length the illegitimacy of a tyrannical secular state; the alleged devotional dedication of *kar sevaks*, their assassination through the guns of paramilitary forces and the subsequent attempt by the Sangh Parivar to establish a cult of martyrdom.[8] Studio owner J K Jain confidently commented on this video that it was: 'a film that moved the people. This was the film which had been most consequential in the Indian history so far'.[9] The third video, entitled *The Truth Shall Not Be Touched* (*Saach ko anch na Pyaree*, 1992, Hindi) has in the previous chapter been described with regard to the presentation of 'evidence' to support the claim for the reconstruction of a Ram temple. Here, it will be discussed in its function to project the movement as a court-case, the nation-people as judge and the martyrs as witnesses of injustice.

Video visions of mother, sons and holy war[10]

Why and how has the concept of martyrdom come to play such a central role in Hindutva imagination and politics? Where have the central images and metaphors to martyrdom been adapted from and how were they exploited in the videos? A key force behind the positioning of the idea of martyrdom at such an exposed point in the discourse of Indianness lies in the complexity of the concept itself as it came to be linked to the already established chain of associations surrounding the metaphor of the tortured body of the Hindu nation.

The videos discussed here constitute an audiovisual martyrology and historiography of the Indian nation which emphasizes that the notion of Hindutva Indianness was inscribed with the narrative of sacred violence and holy war (*dharma yuddha*[11]); of heroic warriors ostensibly dying to protect the honour of and liberate their Motherland. Through this rhetoric, actual violence against alleged threats, in particular from the Muslims, could be legitimized. Let us take a look at the ways in which violence could be transformed into a sacred deed, if not task, to be performed by Hindutvavadis.

The end of tolerance and the sanctity of violence

> There have been 76 battles to liberate the temple, the birthplace of *Sri Ram*, in which 375,000 Hindus have become martyrs. And then the trumpet call for the new battle of liberation began . . . to protect the dignity of the nation.[12]

While the key questions of the previous chapters with respect to modes of self-empowerment were 'How can we create reverence for a map?' and 'How can we rewrite history?' the central question of this chapter is 'How can we transform ordinary citizens into martyrs?'

In the figure of the martyr-to-be, the metaphors of the world as a temple and battlefield, as well as the 'pseudo-secular' state as a prison, found expression as imaginative tools that could be enacted in order to provoke agitation. This agency was very much linked to reciprocal obligations such as duty and loyalty, to feelings of pride and honour.

GMH is, as J K Jain explains in his introductory speech to the video, a homage to Ram, a 'prayer', a manifestation of nationalist fervour. Given the fact that a historiography of battles follows this short introduction, depicting the (unsuccessful) struggle of the Indian people to reassert themselves and unite, this statement was in itself a mantra or a call for battle for the constitution of the imagined Hindu nation. The sacredness of the 76 battles fought, and the death of 375,000 warriors who all became martyrs, became exclusively tied to the site of Ayodhya, the 'symbol of our identity, our country, our national life'.[13] Out of this intense sacralization emerged Lord Rama as a figure of beauty and strength, both in physical appearance and conduct. *GMH* does not refer to *Ramlalla* alone: there are also references to 'the armed warrior who fought for righteousness'[14] and appeals to the viewers to join the battle for Ram *Rajya*.

This image is related to posters of an adult Ram emerging from a model of the proposed birth temple. He seems to face a storm that approaches him; clouds of thunder and fire surround him while he holds bow and arrow firmly in his hands. Time and again, I was told by informants that this warrior-icon was necessary to communicate the end of both the patience and tolerance of the Hindu people, and thus mark the advent of anger and preparation for a revolutionary battle. The image was interpreted as the visualization of Lord Ram's anger upon the refusal of the God of the sea to grant him a safe transfer to the island of Lanka. There, the demon-god Ravana was said to have hidden Ram's wife Sita.[15] Likewise, some informants pointed out that only after Ram threatened to use force was he allowed to cross the sea, supported by general Hanuman's monkey army. Read between the lines in *GMH,* similar interpretations emerge, linked, however, to an alleged crisis in contemporary national

politics. Lord Ram's case was now placed in a context where the Sangh Parivar, as his spokespeople, became authorized to challenge the secular state and those Muslims groups unwilling to hand over the Babri mosque. In order to reach the object of desire, be it the reconstruction of Ram's purported birth temple, or the liberation of Bharat Mata, support was required from Ram *bhaktas* or *kar sevaks*. *GMH* carries footage of a speech by the chief of the Ayodhya municipality, a Mahananda Kumar, as he addresses *kar sevaks* at a meeting on 8 November 1989:

> Lord Ram, even though he is the master of the universe, took a human form and fought to protect our culture and humanity. All of you must acknowledge this depth and fight for his temple at his birthplace. Even if you have to face lathi-charge and bullets. Proclaim the temple will be made there and there only!

This appeal further suggests that the unity and happiness of the Indian nation can only be achieved through a prolongation of the lineage of battles and martyrdom. Such a rhetoric claim affirms Tanika Sarkar's observation as regards the constitution of national communities in India. Discussing Chattopadyay's novel *Anandamath* of 1882, one of the crucial works that established a frame for nationalist imagination in the late nineeenth century and throughout the twentieth century, Sarkar notes that the only way to imagine the Hindu community as *united* was through the projection of a community enrolled in a 'spectacle of violence'[16] and of an Indian citizenry merged into a homogenous body of devotees as 'soldiers at war'.[17]

One crucial scene in the video *GMH* uses the effect of cartoon drawings. The story of a meeting between various warrior-saints to discuss guerrilla strategies in order to resist the Mughal invaders is depicted. The voice-over commentary introduces them as bearers of national pride and dedication. But this battle too, so the story went, was lost, and soon the drawings lead the invisible eye of the camera onto a battlefield covered in the blood of dying and the bodies of dead soldiers (see Figures 11, 62). The relevance of the scene for this discussion lies in the presentation of an important figure that shaped the notion of martyrdom in Hindu nationalism. It is the warrior-saint, a motif that is intended to confer ideal-typical agency and legitimacy to the video-watching *kar sevak*. Footage of the same assembly in Ayodhya presents a speech by a Swami Ramanandas Saraswati: 'The first people who offer their lives as sacrifice will be the *sadhus*, the ordinary people will follow after'. There are indications of a 'hierarchy of martyrdom' in this quote, and we shall return to this when the 'underdog martyr' is discussed below.

It should be mentioned here that pilgrimage sites such as Ayodhya have never been solely sites of peaceful religious assemblies. They often functioned

as a place where power politics of army-like monastic orders were staged. As William Pinch convincingly traces, soldier *sadhus* or *sannyasis* (renouncers), who were known for their access to popular sentiment: 'have for many centuries played a patriotic role in defending (an idealized) Hindu India from foreign, particularly Muslim, depredation'.[18] The activities of the warriors and their 'vision of India . . . combined territorial nationalism and Hindu religious symbolism'.[19] Pinch further points out that, by the end of the nineteenth century, the *sadhu* was perceived as a key figure of Hindu revivalism and patriotism and placed 'at the heart of the Indian body politic'.[20] Thus it could not have taken much effort to recruit this figure into concepts of martyrdom. The important role of warrior-saints (paralleled by a number of warrior-kings and queens)[21] was picked up and marketed systematically by the VHP. Thus, *GMH* carries footage of countless VHP-saints presented as charismatic leaders and warlords, preaching both peace and violence as they address public meetings during *kar seva* in Ayodhya.

In *God Manifests Himself*, songs support the notion of self-sacrificing warriors who seem to be assured of Ram's divine blessings: 'Ram is there, this is his birthplace, this is our pledge, we have no fear . . . We are taking the boat of the nation across the storm, we do not feel thunder or lightning. We accept the challenge and return it'. Many of the songs are accompanied by shots of holy rivers, temples, Hindutva's saffron flag (*bhagadwaj*), worshippers and portraits of Ram. Two different categories of violence were called upon within the notion of the selfless *kar sevak*, thereby distinguishing morally illegitimate and legitimate agents. The first category was allegedly practised by the government and imposed upon the victimized Indian people. The second was allegedly enacted in response to the experience of state oppression. Hindutva rhetoric transferred this uneven relationship between passive victim and revolutionary patriot, fused in one ideal-typical person of the martyr-to-be, to the level of mythic analogy by accompanying him with the stereotyped figure of the 'aggressive Other'. Here, two antagonistic ideas—*goonda rajya* (unjust/criminal rule) and Ram *rajya* (Ram's righteous rule)—came to add symbolic meaning. While minorities like the Muslims were depicted as representatives of *goonda rajya*, encouraging terrorism and separatism as well as abusing their constitutional privileges as a religious minority, 'citizens' of Ram *rajya* could be portrayed as dedicated bearers and courageous protectors of equality, liberty and fraternity. While the first group could be stigmatized as 'terrorists' and 'anti-nationals', the latter became 'freedom fighters' involved in a sacred battle, blessed both by Lord Ram and the peace-loving people. Fighting for the welfare of society thus led to the authorization of holy violence.[22]

The notion of holy violence as it is placed on visual and verbal display in all three videos reveals references to the popular epic *Mahabharata*, in particular the spectacular battle between two enemies, the Pandavas and their cousins,

the Kauravas. While the last scene of *We Can Give Up Our Lives . . .* depicts shots of police attacking *kar sevaks,* a song invokes the epic, addressing those *kar sevaks* who had fought and even died in the police encounter as dedicated soldiers of the Pandavas: 'You were challenging the might of the Kauravas and their armies . . . Victory is yours! . . . You crossed all obstacles and made a path with your own blood'. The epic was not only called upon in BJP rhetoric because of its pan-national popularity and its highly emotional and crisis-ridden potential. The *Mahabharata* narrates the sanctification and support of a war between two enemies by divine forces. Lord Krishna, like Ram the embodiment (*avatar*) of the god Vishnu, is said to have descended from the heavens to establish righteous moral and social order (*dharma*). He did so in a time of emergency, when human beings seemed unable to solve a crisis. *GMH* carries shots of popular prints displaying Arjun, a noble warrior (*Kshatriya*), in a chariot (*rath*). Accompanied by Krishna, he moves towards the battlefield at Kurukshetra (see Figure 47). Krishna's presence at the side of Arjun consecrated the killings and guaranteed victory as everything was supposedly carried out according to *dharma*.[23] Similarly, in a docu-drama scene of the same video, the child Ram appears at a moment when, according to the voice-over commentary, Hindu consciousness was at a stake and required awakening in order to be saved from further societal decline. Such narratives of 'divine miracles', of signs emerging on the television screen like hallucinatory visions, were to enhance the oscillation between the domains of politics and imagination.

Kar sevaks *as militant 'matriots'*

> Motherland, May we sacrifice all for thee.[24]
>
> Bharat Mata is there . . . The same sort of sentiment is with the cow also. And then, there are Rama, Krishna and the different pilgrimage centres. All these things evoke a nationalist sentiment in the people. The only thing is: they have to be translated into the modern idiom . . . . All these things are joined together to save your country! . . . Modern idiom means: the sentiments are there, but you have to arouse them—'Look here, the Britishers cut off the hands of Bharat Mata—here and there—now they're (Pakistan) trying to cut off Kashmir (he makes a sign of decapitation), so this is Bharat Mata, this is what is happening.' And immediately people will react to that by saying: 'Yes, this is happening!'[25]

In order to affirm the aforementioned argument that the videos discussed here ought to be understood as a continuation of established martyrologies, and in order to understand martyrdom as a field of discourse, a discussion of

the elaboration of and reference to the depiction of emotional bonds and personal relationships is crucial.

Next to Ram, the object of nationalist desire within Hindutva ideology and politics, love of the territory as identity-constituting referent is, as we saw previously, Mother India. The *kar sevaks* are defined as her devoted sons. Personified this way, nationalist devotion could thus be projected as 'natural' part of familial love. The intrinsic relationship between nurturing mother and sons, narrated almost like a passion play, has come to serve as a major tool of emotive mobilization.

The narrative of the holy battle in the Ayodhya videos, particularly in *We Can Give Up Our Lives . . .*, reflects the gendered predicament of nationalist agency. Footage and voice-over commentary displays young men, carrying flags or even sticks as they dance or march on the streets while cheerfully chanting slogans. The stage on which the narrative of the battle for Hindu self-empowerment is set is the actual event centred round the flag-hoisting ceremony in autumn 1990 in Ayodhya.

Particularly in *We Can Give Up Our Lives . . .*, the *kar sevaks* come to be defined as key protectors of national pride. They can be understood as 'militant matriots', a term coined by Lise McKean[26] while referring to the VHP's elaboration of a rhetoric based on the self-sacrificial and militant code of conduct of Hindutva supporters to guarantee Mother India's well-being. The term proves useful in discussing the depiction of radical *deshbhakti* in Jain Studios' issue-based videos. The formulation of a crisis that required radical agitation, laid out in the narrative of the Ramjanmabhoomi-Babri mosque controversy, is based on the suggestion that both Ram and Mother India had to be liberated from their imprisonment. Their liberation equals the liberation and reassertion of the Hindu people, and the constitution of ideal nationhood and governance (Chapters 2 and 4). Getting ready to fight in a holy battle in this context means that the male agent had to be prepared to defend *his* mother's, that is, the nation's, honour, to liberate her from the humiliation of purported alien tyranny and threat. The role of the woman is reduced to that of a passive recipient relying on and demanding protection from male agents as well as being ready to give birth to sons as martyrs-to-be.[27] The idealized vision of Mother India as an overarching, uniting and controlling force and as a vessel of male desire, finds reflection in the following statement by Ramnath Ojha, the VHP consultant for *GMH*: 'So many persons say "We are a son of India!" No son can be a *man* without a mother . . . Bharat Mata is higher than all mothers'.[28]

Personhood and peoplehood are thus defined through the metaphor of a mother's love for her son. This also suggests that manhood must find affirmation in the unrestricted love of the son for his mother/motherland. The symbolic relationship between the two implies that any weakening or humiliation of

the mother could instantly affect the status and sentiments of her sons. Thus, in order to keep the reciprocal association in balance, the son has to guard and protect his mother's honour at all times and against all odds. Correspondingly, it is the (male) national citizen who can guarantee the nation's integrity and welfare by the power of his love and loyalty.

A specific kind of 'matriot' was required for Hindutva's battles. The warrior-saint was not the only ideal-typical model appropriated in this context. He had to be strong enough and willing to make history by dedicating his life for the welfare of (Hindu) society. The following reinterpretation of the *vedas*, ancient Sanskrit scriptures, from an RSS perspective, reads: 'He who does not possess (the) spirit of patriotism, does not deserve to be called a man'.[29] National passion, linked to the central concept of masculinity (*purusatva*[30]) and martial spirituality, were identified with physical strength and willpower. Consequently, a man's greatest enemies were said to be physical weakness and lethargy. Reading the same source again it almost sounds like a threatening affirmation of social Darwinism: 'Weakness is the greatest sin and root of all calamities. The weak have no right to live'[31]. However, the orientalist and colonial stereotype of the effeminate Indian male is also inscribed in this attempt to redefine manhood.

Crisis—the source of battle and potential weakness—was constructed on the basis of what was displayed as threat to this natural devotion, the primordial love of sons. It works in a framework set up to constitute a dramatic script evolving from an object-cause of desire. Standing between a citizenry of sons and the nation-mother, pushing the desired object out of reach, is the source of conflict or crisis: an actual or imagined Other who impacts upon the nation in such a way that it could not become 'real' and enjoyable, but has to remain an even more distant, utopian fantasy.[32] This Other (here, predominantly the Muslim) has to also be personified as male in order to increase the narrative tension and to work within the complicated drama of competition, betrayal and jealousy over the fetishized object of devotion. Anti-national elements, so it is assumed, do not respect Mother India as their mother, thus mistaking her for 'any' woman, ready-made for sexual harassment and humiliation, or do not recognise her beauty and importance for the well-being of the nation.

This strategy of using gender for discrimination can be related to what Sarkar calls 'male fantasising that encompasses sexual passion and political violence in a single impulse of pleasure'.[33] Only Mother India's sons may touch and control access to their mother. Yet for this exclusive privilege, they must be prepared to die for her, too. 'Tests' of loyalty were established to distinguish between self and other in Hindutva rhetoric. In the case of the Ayodhya controversy, Muslims were asked to prove their love for the nation by handing over the Babri mosque. Such categories of humiliation allegedly

demanding an instant response are inherent in the following statement by an angry *kar sevak* on display in some footage of *We Can Give Up Our Lives . . .* He says: 'This Babar, who died in India! Nevertheless, he wanted to be buried *elsewhere*, in his *own* country'. In wanting to be buried 'at home', not in India, Babar became a representative for an essentialized attitude of the so-called 'anti-national' Muslim whose loyalties and bonds, so it has often been stated, were said not to be directed towards the Indian territory but towards 'his' holy-land (Mecca) and ideal-typical transnational brotherhood (*ummah*).

Mention must be made here of a misinterpretation on the part of those Hindutva ideologues who argue that Muslims *per se* do not recognize the idea of patriotism and are thus essentially anti-national. In Iran, for example, identical gendered metaphors of motherland/ birthplace (*vatan*), purity of the woman/ nation, the lovers of the nation (*vatan'parasti*) and the love of the homeland (*vatan'dusti*) exist.[34] Furthermore, the Islamic notion of *vatan* of around 1900 was based on adaptations of both the European concepts of the modern nation-state (*la patrie*) and a reinterpretation of Persian-Islamic traditions, especially *sufi*. Like *bhakti* devotion, *sufi* poetry emphasises the unification with the divine and is based on mystical erotic love poetry.[35] Finally, *vatan* came to delineate a bounded territory like Iran as an essential ingredient of the constitution of a brotherhood in order to distinguish one community, in Afsaneh Najmabadi's words, from 'other emerging brotherhoods such as the Arabs, the Ottoman Turks, the Japanese, the Indians, and of course, the nations of Europe'.[36] By claiming the power of definition over motherhood and national devotion, Hindutva ideologues denied other members of Indian society the right to particularity and the 'competence' of having any nationalist feelings.

Mother and 'matriot'—an excursus on iconography and poetry

The concept of the martyr, as well as the cult of the mother goddess in India, existed before the introduction of the Western model of the modern nation-state and the elaboration of an infrastructure for visual mass media around 1900. With the rise of nationalism and the spread of the popular media such as chromolithographs, journals and leaflets with anti-colonial slogans and poetry in around 1900 in India, mother goddess and warrior-saint were reinterpreted and married to each other in the dynamic narrative of national sovereignty. Because of this 'career', they would later acquire a new relevance for post-colonial Hindu nationalism.

Popular prints have repeatedly displayed the Motherland as a figure in despair, humiliated by invading forces, in need of protection by her male warrior-sons in battle (see Figures 57 and 59), or calling her children to join her in the battle against diverse anti-national threats, for example, Christianity, Islam and



Figure 74 Hindutva New Year card of Mother India calling her sons into battle (1990s). Designed by Balraj. Private collection.

(especially American-dominated) capitalism (Figure 74). The narratives arising from such a relationship may revolve around the mother giving birth to and nourishing her son; leaving him a life-long dependency and an obligation to 'pay her back'; feelings of violation and loss of honour and pride when the mother/nation encounters external threats, and the projection of a final reinstatement of right and order through the son's awakening and empowerment. The language of Hindutva cultural nationalism relies heavily on the figure of the mother as the guarantor and keeper of tradition and spirituality of 'Indian' ethos. This attribute of preservation has been confined to the domain of the interior, while the son is positioned within the public and political sphere.[37]

I pointed out before that Hindutva's employment of Bharat Mata as a powerful 'wish-image', especially regarding her association with Hindu Goddesses like Kali or Durga, derived from the time of British colonization

and anti-colonial agitation. As such a hybrid *avatar*, Bharat Mata came to be particularly attributed with the efficacy of a war-goddess that was consequently related to both patriotic self-empowerment and sacred rituals of human sacrifice. Bharat Mata was displayed as one who claimed lives and called her sons for battle. Around 1900, the national icon started to be commodified by various agents in order to make nationhood visible and desirable for a rising bourgeois audience. The 'wish-image' of Bharat Mata rapidly entered the spheres of public culture and politics, where it circulated in poster art, theatre, poetry and later, film.[38] The colonial rulers were both fascinated and sceptical of this ambivalent figure that could cover an emotional width from bloody sacrifice to physical beauty and chastity.[39] In the first decade of the twentieth century, the aesthetics of Indianness were linked to individual initiatives for a radical nationalism that were grounded on self-sacrifice and even militancy.[40] In 1907, for instance, a painting named *Blessings Amidst Torture*, in academic style by an artist named Chattopadhyay, was published in the Indian nationalist journal *Prabasi*.[41] It depicts a freedom fighter tortured by British police, and while standing firm and looking up to the sky, he is showered with heavenly blessings from Mother India seated on a lion. The presentation of the son being blessed by his mother as a result of his spiritual firmness and familial loyalty suggests a kind of fulfilment that helped the victim to belittle physical torture and even death in the sight of divine pleasure.

At the same time, the 'geobody' of the female nation became a sign and site of moral qualities in terms of physical torture, the embodiment for inscriptions of political concepts and spiritual experiences.[42] Torture was not only visualized as an act carried out on the body of the male martyr, but also appeared in images of Bharat Mata. Nationalist imagery of the 1940s and 1950s, for example, is inhabited by references to her rape and mutilation, an iconography based on the experience of ethnic pre- and post-independence riots and the traumatic event of Partition itself. Partition reinforced metaphors of Mother India's dismemberment and appealed to her sons to resist this fragmentation. This is reflected in the following lines from former RSS leader Golwalkar: 'How can a son forget and sit idle when the sight of his mutilated mother stares him in the face every day? Forget? No true son can ever forget, or rest till she becomes once again her complete whole'.[43] This quote bears a similarity to Aurobindo Ghose's letter to his wife, Mrinalini Devi (30 August 1905), in which the poet associated cartographic threat to vampirism and to the grotesque iconography of neo-gothic Victorianism: 'I look upon my country as the Mother. I adore her . . . What would a son do if a demon sat on his mother's breast and started sucking her blood?'[44]

However, love poems dedicated to the Mother, such as those by Golwalkar or Ghose as well as another example published in the *Organiser* in the 1950s, also suggested an identification of national devotion to the mother's body in

terms of an 'eroticized nationalism'[45] ('We're one body in thee—thy heroes brave and free'), the duty to protect the mother ('How our conscience blushes when we fail in duty'), and the readiness to sacrifice oneself ('We hug danger for thee . . . to bathe in thy God-light!').[46] Love for the nation, so the suggestion went, could transform the weak into firm, iron men. In fact, in her study on Tamil nationalist rhetoric, Ramaswamy argues that: 'If nationalism is a structure of sentiment that turns around longing and belonging, such regimes of desire which eroticize the imagined community of the citizenry are critical to the ideologies of the nation'.[47]

A nationalist poem of the early years of India's independence elucidates Ramaswamy's argument in that it addresses the fusion of male desire and ascetic devotion in nationalist enthusiasm with regard to the newly gained national sovereignty. The lines reflect the intention to rid society of collective weakness and fear of effeminacy through the power of racial and spiritual superiority:

No more weakness!
Ay, no more fear!
The strength is here!
The goal is near!
To truth we pour our liberation. . . .
Children of immortality,
Living lamps of Divinity!
Come, let us be a super-race,
By godly life and sacrifice![48]

However, it is also worth mentioning that the 'matriot' iconography of Mother India and her sons-as-soldiers was not only popular among Hindutva organizations. One example is that of the National Cadet Corps who advertised for new recruits in the 1960s, during the time of India's wars with Pakistan and China by printing a poster with Bharat Mata and the map of India. Heroic national martyrs such as Bhagat Singh and Subhas Chandra Bose pay devotion to her as ordinary soldiers march towards the war.[49]

Martyrdom as testimony and 'final resort of the weak'

In Hindutva rhetoric, martyrdom is clearly gendered as a 'male domain'. In the following pages, the intrinsic relationship between martyrdom and ideas of male personhood shall be explored as regards their rootedness in Hindutva ideology, iconography and present-day political reinterpretations. Interestingly enough, there is no explicit concept of martyrdom in Hindu religious thought and practices. Instead, what Hindu nationalists claim to be an essential Hindu model of agency is a montage and reinterpretation of several concepts of

martyrdom that have been appropriated from politics and other religious beliefs and practices. The notion of 'dynamic devotion' as a device to legitimize (Hindu) aggression therefore plays a key role, and shall be discussed as it finds expression in politicized spiritual concepts such as *satyagraha* (e.g., Mohandas K Gandhi's concept of non-violent search for, or performative display of, 'truth', see below), or the iconography and metaphors of the head-sacrifice that were appropriated and altered from Christian and Sikh traditions and thought (see below). In all these models, martyrdom comes to be depicted as an agent's active response resulting from his (rarely 'her') confrontation with states of emergency, as the 'final resort' in opposing a quasi-tyrannical system. Through self-sacrifice, the martyr does not only become a representative of a social group but also constitutes it by providing it with a narrative of self-defence and purpose.

Dynamic devotion of Men with a capital 'M'

The author of a book on the *vedas* distributed by the RSS states: 'Patriotism requires the son of the soil to sacrifice his personal benefits at the altar of national ones . . . (Men should) go to the extent of even dedicating their full lives for her [Mother India's] sake'.[50] In this quote, martyrdom-as-patriotism is presented as an ancient concept. Furthermore, borders between selfhood and nationality are blurred to the point of their invisibility. At the core of the argument lies the suggestion that legitimate citizenship can only be claimed if the body of the nation is identical with the body of each and every citizen, when the world becomes a temple, as much as each individual becomes a place of nation-worship (see Figures 18 and 53).

However, a video like *GMH* also combines metaphors of the temple with the battlefield, worship with 'warship', and weakness with cowardliness. In the following quote, this pairing is achieved by linking manliness to devotional nationalism and impotency to anti-national parasitism: 'He who does not possess spirit of patriotism does not deserve to be called a man. He is worse than a beast. He who does not owe allegiance to the land in whose lap he is born and brought up, is called a traitor'.[51] Although the Jain Studios' videos refrain from using such explicit hate-speech, the voiceover commentary's reference to manhood/nationhood as being intrinsically linked to the recognition of Bharat Mata and Ram as national icons alerts the viewer to similar associations. Those who do not adhere to this obligation are either referred to as ungrateful or disrespectful, thus humiliating the Hindu sentiment. This notion of collective humiliation links the alleged suffering of the Hindu people to martyrdom as both sacred devotion and militant masculinity.

RSS leader M S Golwalkar defines 'dynamic devotion' as 'a spirit of readiness to sacrifice our all for the protection of the freedom and honour of every speck of this motherland'.[52] This is clearly in reference to Veer Savarkar's writings on the sacredness of territory as well as the religious concept of *shakti-pithas* (resorts or seats of the divine) (Chapter 4). Furthermore, Golwalkar adapts the idea of martyrdom to elaborate a magical 'protection-shield' and counter-models of agency and remembrance with respect to Mughal invasion, British colonialism, and separatism: '[I]s not every speck of our land protected and purified by the sacred blood of countless heroes and martyrs?'[53] To prevent the 'deterioration' of the national spirit, Golwalkar issues the following appeal:

> Let us re-live those great ideals [of *deshbhakti*]. Let us shake off the present-day emasculating notions and become real living men, bubbling with national pride. . . . Only such a band of young men fired with a missionary zeal can rouse our people to action and ward off the grave perils threatening our country from inside and outside. . . . Today, more than anything else, Mother needs such men—young, intelligent, dedicated and more than all virile and masculine. . . And such are the men who make history—*men with a capital* 'M'.[54]

Golwalkar's concept of 'dynamic devotion' was echoed in a conversation with Rohit M, a developmental filmmaker with close ties to the Deendayal Research Institute in New Delhi. He explained to me why in *We Can Give Up Our Lives . . .*, in his opinion, the *kar sevaks* of the flag-hoisting agitation in Ayodhya 1990 were projected and perceived themselves as standing with their backs to the wall. In his view, they had been left with the choice of either surrendering to or resisting the so-called secular terror and Muslim-instigated humiliation. Here, aggressive speech and violent action are legitimized in the light of the defensive agency forced upon them. This attitude enabled a depiction of the aggressive *kar sevaks*' 'voluntary' martyrdom as, to use the words of Carl Ernst in his discussion of Islamic martyrdom, 'the final resort of the weak against the powerful'.[55] Responding to the question of why the *kar sevaks* had become martyrs, Rohit M (RM) said that it was:

> RM: . . . because they [the *kar sevaks*] took the initiative. They were the first to do it. They were in the offensive mood. 25 per cent were in the offensive mood and 75 per cent were in the defensive mood . . . The way people have been interested in Hinduism in the last decade—that was because of the so-called aggressive stand it has taken up to in the last ten, fifteen years. But that aggressive stand is a momentary one, it's *for the cause of justice*. Aggressiveness is *not* the essence of Hinduism. *Certainly it is not*! But of course, when you are in a back-to-the-wall kind of

situation, then ultimately you become offensive, to save your own life. But the essence of Hinduism lies in something very different.

CB: But who is actually offending? Who's pushing the Hindus with their back to the wall?

RM: See, it's not a question of the last ten or five years. It's the history and all that. This situation hasn't arrived here in just five or ten years. What you are looking at is not the result of that. It's been putting and building up in hundreds of years. And now because you have a democratic system you can put your voice on. You know?! This is why you know that now it's happening. Because in this democracy you have the common history that can proceed. So all of a sudden 25 per cent of Hindus think that now is the right time to do the protest, and that protest vote changes the central government, and with the change of central government the world recognizes it [Hindutva's legitimacy]. But it's not a truth that it happened just in a matter of fifteen years. We are in a transition phase.

CB: In every movement you need people who are in the offensive!?

RM: Absolutely! Within the Freedom Struggle also. I don't think the whole of India was so aggressive . . . One fourth was in an aggressive mood, the others were not opposing this kind of movement but they were not very aggressive to commit themselves to the public. I think that kind of situation happened in the Freedom Struggle. The same kind of thing is here: one third of the society *has* to become aggressive at a certain point.[56]

To 'awaken' the Hindu people, and release them from their back-to-the-wall position, according to Rohit M, required the leadership of a small segment of society, aggressive men instantly reacting to the crisis of national identity. In the interview, they are portrayed as having voluntarily chosen to stage their anger and suffering in a public, that is, in a highly visible and crisis-loaded context so that the 'rest' of Hindu society could recognize the signs of martyrdom. Furthermore, the remark that 'we are in a transition phase' is directly linked to the transformative energy of public rituals staged in the context of the Ayodhya controversy. This idea of ritual dynamic enabled Rohit M to legitimize violence as a performative tool of change for the alleged welfare of the nation.

In Chapter 3, attention was focused on the idea of intervisuality as an aesthetic activity underlying Jain Studios' issue-based videos and Hindutva rhetoric in general. The dynamics of visual production as a form of social practice and constitution of meaning also become evident in the context of

the iconography of masculinity. Narratives of the creation of order through violence appear at a point when the state has allegedly failed to install order, thus inviting criminality, corruption, state lethargy and police brutality. They found similar articulation in parallel domains of cultural production of that time, such as commercial film in India. The theme of the 'angry young man' had already been taken up in films of the 1970s and 1980s.[57] But in the 1990s, this subject matter reached a new level in which masculinity through violence became almost glorified. Heroes, played by Hindi film actors like Nana Patekar, were depicted as war-machines, as Indian Rambos or Schwarzeneggers, frustrated and disenchanted with the world as it was, and dedicated to challenge injustice by becoming guerrilla fighters. The image of the machine-like warrior impacted on an ideal-typical model of manhood[58] and could well have served as an imaginary point of reference for the identification of those young Hindu men from the lower middle classes who presented themselves as warriors (*Ram bhaktas*) in the Ayodhya controversy.

If we go back to Hindutva rhetoric, here too, feelings of anger and frustration are invoked and linked to the demand for self-defence and a militarization of thought and practice, as well as language. B L Sharma, VHP activist and former member of parliament (BJP; Rajya Sabha) explains: 'I cannot save my children if I'm not a warrior. You cannot save a temple if there are no arms with you'.[59] Similarly to Rohit M, he proposed that every nation required both people who could preserve knowledge (Brahmans) and those who could defend the nation with their lives (Kshatriyas, warriors). In the colonial context of Hindu revivalism and the post-colonial predicament of Hindutva, the rather transcendental idea of devotional self-sacrifice (*tyaaga*), generally restricted to the domain of ritualized spiritual thought and practice, especially *dharma* and asceticism, was shifted to the domain of militant action for a national cause. This shift is present in the following comment by Ramesh K, co-scriptwriter of *We Can Give Up Our Lives . . .*, on the *kar sevaks* that were killed in the encounter with police in 1990: 'The sacrifice of our life is not a problem. But our soul should be prompted and boosted with the promise. (. . .) This is not any temple, but the nation. It is a question of nation, culture, and all these things. . . .'[60]

Hindutva martyrology feeds on multiple sites of meaning by adapting and transforming concepts of metaphysical salvation (*moksha*) to the domain of inner-worldly agency. The dichotomy of renouncer versus householder is collapsed in the hybrid composition of the *kar sevak*. The individual duty of the renouncer to uphold cosmological order by living a devout and religious life came to be identified with the householder's duty to sacrifice himself for the family and the citizen's compulsion to serve the nation. Through the selfless protection of national welfare, a form of agency defined as the main motor and

goal of mundane agency, a man could become a hero (*vira, sura,* or *shahid*) and be acknowledged as such.[61]

The meaning of the pledge

In the videos, the concept of heroic selfless death is enhanced as an important choreographic element for the creation of a martyr's cult. The *kar sevaks* are depicted as agents bound to their pledge, that is, their dedication to liberate Mother India, and the birthplace of Ram. The pledge serves as a central point of reference not only in the title of *We Can Give Up Our Lives But Can't Break Our Vow* itself, but is also evident in many songs, footage presenting individual statements of *kar sevaks* and voice-over commentary such as 'We take the vow in the name of Ram that we will make the temple there'. As another form of ritual practice, the event of a publicly performed pledge was meant to enhance the idea of a dedicated fraternal community. The ritualistic device of the pledge has already been constituted as part of a narrative that was to mark the birth and affirm the strength of revolutionary or nationalist movements in Europe around the turn of the nineteenth century. In addition to the key motifs of battle and rebellion, executions and massacres and coronation, the oath figured centrally in the symbolic constitution of national sovereignty, for example, in Switzerland.[62] The pledge of the warrior to defend his motherland or fatherland was also part of the 'blood-and-soil' (*Blut-und-Boden*) ideology and cults of the dead in German Fascism. As an expression of absolute loyalty and dedication to 'truthfulness' it also plays a major role in Hindutva spokespeople's concern with 'indigenous' models of self-empowerment and resistance; the idea of *satyagraha*.

Redefining truthfulness

As outlined above, the language of Hindu nationalist martyrology is based upon various social and religious models. There is, for example, the renounced warrior or mystic as he is described in Chattopadhyay's novel *Anandamath;* the pilgrim-soldier (*Ram bhakta*) at war; the son protecting the honour of his motherland; and the freedom fighter, or the *satyagrahi* (one holding firmly to the truth) practising 'soul-force' and non-violence (*ahimsa*).[63] They all merge in the creolized figure of the *kar sevak* as he is projected in *We Can Give Up Our Lives . . . .*

The symbolic meaning of the pledge as a model of dedication and solidarity frames narratives and performances and gives them order as well as drama. Its association with dedication and truthfulness links it to another model of agency that shaped the notion of martyrdom in Hindutva audiovisual rhetoric. For

example, in *The Truth Shall Not Be Touched*, by referring it to *satyagraha,* the *kar sevak's* agency with regard to the Ayodhya controversy is coupled with both religious pilgrimage and political campaign, depicting the *kar sevak* both as peaceful pilgrim and freedom fighter. Likewise, *We Can Give Up Our Lives. . .* displays footage of violent encounters between *kar sevaks* and police forces as the latter blocked the road to prevent the Hindutvavadis' proceeding to the disputed site. An interview between cameraman Rahul T and a *kar sevak* heightens the tension of the video narrative when the informant tells the running camera: 'We were performing a *satyagraha* on the street peacefully, but they started shooting us. We were told not to resort to any form of violence. So we got hit at, and innocent people were being killed'. And 'while we were watching the video together, Ramesh K, the scriptwriter to this video added: "Without order police fired, although *Ram bhaktas* (devotees of Ram) were just chanting! They are firing at *bhaktas* who were empty-handed' (see Figures 75 and 76). Such examples provoke memories of encounters between Indians and British military during the Freedom Struggle, especially Mohandas K Gandhi's notion of *satyagraha* as a civil disobedience movement against the British opponents, which implied the importance of bringing about a change of heart and mind in the opponent through self-suffering. They refer pilgrimage as a national-political event to Gandhi's concept of active non-violence (*ahimsa*) and resistance in the context of the struggle for independence. Identifying him with the *satyagrahi*, the *kar sevak* could be said to know and hold the Truth.[64] Furthermore, through his action, he could reveal and confront the injustice of the oppressing enemy by presenting himself as ready to face torture and even death, like the freedom fighter depicted in the aforementioned journal *Prabasi* (1907). The key thought behind this is that such non-violent behaviour would bring about a change of attitude in the opponent or oppressor. The projection of the *kar sevaks*' martyrdom as a consequence arising from their alleged *satyagraha* in *We Can Give Up Our Lives . . .* finds its most dramatic appeal in the juxtaposition of footage of their purported non-violent passivity with that of the lathi-charging police, the shooting, and finally the dead *kar sevaks* and the bloodstained streets of Ayodhya (Figures 77, 78).

This model of agency can be aligned to what Werner Schiffauer refers to as a central element of martyrdom, that is, 'passive activism'.[65] Even though the videos enhance the image of *kar sevaks* as peaceful freedom fighters, the concept of *satyagraha* could not find support among all segments within the Sangh Parivar. Commenting on non-violence (*ahimsa*) as a sufficient strategy to challenge the secular government, B L Sharma (BLS) strengthened his emphasis on the synthesis of sacred knowledge and martial ethics for Hindutva pragmatism. In our conversation, he came up with a definition of *ahimsa* that differed from Gandhi's insofar as he demanded a redefinition of the term in order to legitimize physical violence:



Figure 75 Police forces clash with *kar sevaks* on the streets of Ayodhya. Still from *We Can Give Up Our Lives . . .*



Figure 76 Ibid.



Figure 77 Trails of blood on the streets of Ayodhya. Still from *We Can Give Up Our Lives . . .*



Figure 78 Three 'underdog' *kar sevaks* lying in a side-street of Ayodhya. Still from *We Can Give Up Our Lives . . .*

CB: Violence in the country of (M K) Gandhi?

BLS: Yes, yes! Gandhi also believed in that! He demanded *ahimsa*. *Ahimsa* does not mean that if somebody comes and takes my wife, I can say okay, *thik hai, le jaye* [alright, take her]! That's not *dharma*. Aaaarhh (he raises his voice), it will not be loved! The enemy should not have that spirit to come into your home. You should be sooo powerful—*that* is real *ahimsa*! *Ahimsa* does not mean that if somebody slaps you, you say 'okay'. If somebody tries my daughter I say, 'okay, it's a common property for everyone, okay, I only want peace'. But we don't want the peace of a graveyard! . . . Only brave persons can maintain peace. If you want peace in this world, you have to be *strong*!

CB: What does that mean? Does it mean that Gandhi was not brave?

BLS: No, no! He may have been brave in his own way, but people [today] reject it.

CB: But what is the solution?

BLS: The solution is: Be strong, work on, teach everybody that we are all one!! Come along, let us embrace the entire world, the universe is one! Lord is one! The main idea is: If I say, 'my *Gita* [*Bhagavad Gita,* a key scripture on Hindu thought] is above all'—that is wrong. If you say, 'my Bible is above all'—it is wrong. If somebody says, 'if you don't believe

> in the Bible you will be slain' . . . If I say, 'if you don't believe in the Gita you'll be slain' . . . We don't say that. We say, 'let us coexist'. Try to understand each and everyone. Truth is one, there can be different ways to reach the Truth. But Islam says, 'the Qur'an is the only path!'. Christians say, 'the bible is the only path'. It is not that . . . The thing lies with Hindus themselves. They have to *come out* with their knowledge, all right, we could not get a chance for the last 1,200 years: this is the humanity. This is GOD! . . . We are not fundamentalists in that!
>
> CB: But what do you think about the claim that the VHP is militant?
>
> BLS: No! Militant in the sense, they say about this Ramjanmabhoomi and all that: we don't want to *harm* anybody. But we should see that no one should harm us! That's all. We don't want to touch anybody, we will not allow anybody to touch us! We should be like a hot iron, nobody should be able to touch it. That's all![66]

In this excerpt from a personal interview, we find an identification of national community with somatic metaphors, that is, the 'harmed body' of the Hindu people that should be metamorphosed into a 'hot iron' in order to 'defend' itself sufficiently. There are also references to the idea of the external threat to society-as-family, in particular held together through women, and the appeal to men to defend them. Associations also bear similarity to Rohit M's aforementioned elaboration of the Hindu people pushed against an invisible wall and drawing upon their last resources in order to defend themselves. Religion as a marker of the alleged 'Hindu sentiment' in terms of tolerance is here too.

The complexity of Sharma's response indicates that the idea of martyrdom unfolds in ongoing acts of negotiation. But most of all, it requires scope for pathos (instead of reflection) in order to mobilize—not for diplomacy or peace—but for battle. *We Can Give Up Our Lives . . .* carries footage of a public speech by Ashok Singhal (General Secretary, VHP). Addressing *kar sevaks* in Ayodhya, he pledges: 'And if hundreds of thousands have to give up their lives, then we are ready for it!' As the video footage documents how he receives victorious applause from the audience, the video as a whole comes to serve as a 'hot iron', both a warning to the enemies, and an appeal to those seeking strength, a verbal and visual phantasmagoria of violence and blood.

The legitimization of violence and sacrifice for the constitution of a utopian community demands the dramatization and polarization of 'justice' and 'injustice'. For this, particular formulas are needed. The amalgamation of various models of 'truthful' sacrifice have been mentioned above, one of which is *satyagraha*. In the introduction to her extensive edited volume on comparative

martyrdom, Elisabeth Wood emphasizes that the frames of reference for the creation of martyrs and martyrdom have changed with the times and contexts.[67] In the previous paragraphs we could see how non-violence and violence are negotiated in the context of the 1990 *kar seva*. As a mode of representation and authorization of 'truth', popular martyrologies generally rely on ostensible eyewitness reports, and the footage of Rahul T's interview of the *kar sevak* commenting on *satyagraha* in *We Can Give Up Our Lives* . . . affirms the video's role as a 'modern martyrology'. The eyewitness report can be found in the hagiographies of early Christianity and Greek Antiquity. In the South Asian context, community-constitution by means of martyrdom plays a central role in Sikh scriptures, for example, the *Adi Granth* or *Bhai Gurdas*. The earliest manifestation of this text appeared in the seventeenth century AD, and became of increasing importance in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when it became closely related to the anti-colonial and national movement in North India.[68] The figure of the martyr as a witness to injustice crystallizes in another concept, that of the *shahid*: 'The shahid is one who dies heroically, testifying to his or her faith on the path of God'.[69] However, this term had been appropriated from Arabic, in the Qur'an the 'witness' is the one who testifies and observes for Allah and the Prophet Muhammad. The noun 'shahid', says Fenech, 'has been used in the Indian subcontinent for well over 500 years . . . To this day . . . there is no Indian-language noun for the witness as signifying one who dies for his or her faith'.[70] With regards to Hindutva martyrdom and nationalist devotion, the figures of the *shahid* and *bhakta* provide yet another symbolic and iconographic layer of meaning that can be re-interpreted and displayed.

Appropriating the inner **sanctum sanctorum** *of the* **kar sevak**

> *Ram is the eternal truth, he's the ideal man. The construction of the temple—it will not just be outside us. It will be inside of us. A temple has to be built in each of us. Our rajya [rule, kingdom] has to become Ram rajya (Ram's rule). Everyone has to become Ram. We have to inculcate the personality of Ram in each of us. In ancient times you could have one Ram as king. Today we are a democracy—every citizen has to be Ram! Then only can we have Ram rajya, the rule of Ram.*[71]

One of the crucial reasons behind the exploitation of the notion of martyrdom in Hindutva rhetoric, particularly in the context of the Ramjanmabhoomi controversy, was that it further enabled Sangh Parivar spokespeople to commodify and claim possession over personal devotion. Some key images related to utmost religious dedication and loyalty, as they appear repeatedly in video script and imagery, shall thus be analysed in more detail.

Script and footage of *We Can Give Up Our Lives . . .* reveal a visual and metaphorical landscape of bloodstained martyrdom from which two key motifs appear time and again that can be traced back to revivalist Hinduism during colonial rule. There is the reference to the *kar sevak* as *Ram bhakt* (devotee), opening his chest to reveal that his heart has been transformed into a seat of gods and goddesses, a visualization of the above quote from *GMH*. We also find the motif of the sacrifice of the head directly related to the idea of sacred battle in the martial persona of the *shahid* (see Figure 18).

The attempt to visualize devotion and to furnish these images with authority is not specifically 'Indian'. In ancient Greece, Socrates is said to have mentioned shops that sold little figurines that could be 'opened up down the middle of folded back, and then they show inside them, images of the gods'.[72] The Middle Ages in Northern Europe, according to anthropologist Alfred Gell, had something called *vièrges ouvrantes*: Our Lady would open her chest to reveal Jesus Christ. Catholic 'sacred heart' iconography features Christ and Mary opening their chests. But Christian iconography has no depiction of martyrs wrenching their chests open. Rare examples of an iconography that montaged the heart onto the martyr are those of Gertrude of Helfta and Ignatius of Antioch.[73] Despite its European roots, the iconography of the devotee opening his chest seems to have suited the needs of its Indian producers to relate devotional nationalism or, to use Golwalkar's term 'dynamic devotion', to personal devotion.

The motif of the martial warrior dedicating his head to the guru or god/dess seems more specifically regional, though equally syncretic in its structure. Alfred Gell points out that a picture, in its function as an idol, should be treated as an agent itself, attributed with spirit, soul and ego.[74] In this respect he also mentions the concept of the mind as 'a person contained within a person'.[75] Similarly to Pinney,[76] Gell talks of the body becoming an 'indexical form of the mind'. Although attributes could be externally fixed, as in memorial photography or popular prints, they must be understood as markers of an internal state of being. These attributes could work as 'eye-openers' for the viewer, to make him or her understand the 'inner conception of agency', of imagination as a part of social practice.

An examination of the iconography of nationalist devotion is relevant to the subject matter. Therefore, let us take a look at the *leitmotif* of the mythological figure Hanuman, known as Rama's most faithful devotee (*Ram bhakt*) and leader of the monkey army who supported Ram in his battle against Ravana by providing him not only with loyalty, but also putting a whole army of his monkey soldiers at his disposal. Popular poster iconography displays Hanuman as he opens his chest to reveal his deepest object of devotion: Ram and his wife Sita (see Figure 18).



Figure 79 Bhagat Singh opening his chest. Nehru Memorial Library, Delhi, Photographic Collection (No. 36512).

Many of the anti-colonial posters produced and distributed after 1930, particularly following the hanging of Bhagat Singh and the death of his comrades, carried references to Christian iconography. Based upon this motif, prints of the 1930s display the young boy Bhagat Singh, the revolutionary who was imprisoned and hanged by the British during the Freedom Struggle (Figure 79). Dressed in a Western suit (to escape British prosecution he once had to camouflage himself as an Indian *sahib* [master]) and a turban, signifying his Sikh origin, he opens his 'sanctum sanctorum', thereby revealing a portrait photograph of himself as a man wearing his 'logo', a Western-style hat. This montage collapses the short life of Bhagat Singh and comrades into one image, the boy and the man, shortly before he was arrested and hanged by the British. Bhagat Singh and his comrades fought—and died—for a Socialist Republic in India. Their ideas on militant activism were not evolved to create a nationalist movement on the basis of a particular ethno-religious agenda. Rather, they envisaged India's sovereignty to be carried out by an international community

of workers engaged in socialist revolutionary activities.[77] Today, they are displayed and perceived as martyrs who died for the Indian nation, and particularly Bhagat Singh enjoys great popularity within BJP propaganda.

The iconographic make-up of this image leads us to European medieval and votive Sacred Heart iconography that was introduced to India by Jesuit and other Christian missionary activities in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. However, it would be too facile to assume that images bring along with them a ready-made set of information and meaning, decodable in only one way, whatever context they were to be placed in. Possibly, this iconography of a *Ram bhakt* was evolved by Indian popular artists, around the 1920s, through their possible familiarity with Christian iconography. Yet, it was not so much an interest in Christianity as such; or Christian devotional practice in particular, that would have led to this adaptation. Rather, a fascination with and curiosity about new forms of expression that had been enabled and circulated by new global media technologies would have impacted on this mimetic act. The iconography of the Sacred Heart seemed an adequate aesthetic solution for the mimesis and altered representation of a person's innermost beliefs.

Despite the anti-colonial content of many visual messages of that time, they regularly displayed references to Victorian fairy tales and children's books in the style of Grandville, compositions of classicist and romanticist Symbolism that circulated in the domain of the Indian upper and middle classes in mass reproduced media such as journals.[78] Again, rather than identifying with the content of those pictures, foreign technologies and iconography were appreciated by many image-makers and ideologues, for its potential to create a new 'think-space' in which notions of struggle, death and paradise, salvation and devotion could be commodified as 'wish-images'. Following Benjamin's arguments on the mimetic faculty of new media technologies, it could be argued that the aforementioned processes enhanced identity constitution by providing new means of visualization and representation, thus contributing to a patterning of ways of seeing and experiencing.[79]

Images of headless 'extreme nationalism'

> And once you step onto this path, you may well give up your head, rather than the cause . . . He who is martyred in such a fight attains to such bliss that even the holiest of the holy yogis would envy.[80]

One key metaphor of self-sacrifice with regard to the Ayodhya controversy was the sacrifice of a heroic warrior's life in the gesture of offering his head to the object of devotion, that is, the nation personified, and sanctified in Durga or Bharat Mata. In both *God Manifests Himself* and *We Can Give Up Our Lives . . .*,

there are constant references in songs, voice-over commentary and speeches to the gesture of head sacrifice in order to suggest sacred battle and self-sacrifice for the nation. For example, in *God Manifests Himself*, we see and hear the highly charismatic VHP spokeswoman Sadhvi Rithambhara appealing to the audience of *kar sevaks*: 'We can behead ourselves. But we can not lower our heads'. In its songs and imagery, *We Can Give Up Our Lives . . .* also repeatedly reveals metaphors related to the sacrifice of the head in lines such as: 'Take my head too!'

The image of the decapitated warrior-as-heroic-martyr is the dramatized form of the *Ram bhakt* opening his chest as well as the *satyagrahi* who exposes injustice by means of his or her 'passive activism'. VHP activist and artist Satyanarayan Maura explains the symbolical meaning behind the head-sacrifice: 'It means: "Our whole life, please take it!" Extreme patriotism! Living for the nation, for Ram—our whole life and work is for the nation. The head symbolizes our life: extreme nationalism'.[81]

While the motif of the hero opening his chest could be seen as the moderate version of self-dedication, the idea of head-sacrifice, as it was employed in the context of the Ayodhya controversy, can be aligned to Golwalkar's concept of 'dynamic devotion' and militant masculinity. Both prototypical images had already been evolved in the first decades of the twentieth century, as a result of a fusion of ideas of religious and political devotionalism for the purpose of mobilization. The image of head-sacrifice journeyed from its employment in devotional iconography to anti-colonial rhetoric, to its use for appeals to Indian soldiers in the wars against China and Pakistan in the 1960s, to the Sangh Parivar's fight against 'pseudo-secularism' in the 1980s.[82] In most of those popular prints, warrior-kings, gurus or revolutionaries of different political colour offer their heads to Bharat Mata.

Around 1990, in order to dramatize the notion of sacred violence, of the battle for truth fought by 'Ram's devotees', Hindutva rhetoric came to rely on iconographic sources from Sikh popular culture and hagiographies. The visually and verbally narrated history of a martial Sikhism on display as manifest, for example, in countless popular prints or children books, is imbued with references to the heroic martyrdom and legendary capacity of the Sikh people to face endless torture by Mughal oppressors. Among the heroic martyrs is, for instance, Deep Singh who, to prevent the desecration of gurdwaras and to resist tyranny of foreign oppression, fought the Afghan army in the second half of the eighteenth century. The legend goes that he was decapitated but continued to fight the battle. Carrying his head in one hand while killing his enemies with the sword in his other, he only stopped, and died, upon reaching the sacred city of Amritsar (Figure 80).[83] The elaboration of a militant rhetoric of Hindu nationalism and the idea of martyrdom's glory in the context of Hindutva reveals the adaptation of a (self-)stigmatized perception and depiction of Sikh



Figure 80 Baba Deep Singh. Bazaar print, published by Brijbasi & Sons, New Delhi. Private collection.

thought and practice. There is a great affinity towards the concept of the Khalsa, the Sikh brotherhood, based on ideas of martial ethics and arts that evolved within the context of Sikh opposition to Mughal superiority, when Muslim rulers enforced mass conversion of Hindus to Islam.[84] In the late 1990s, for example, the VHP began to distribute small *trichuls* (tridents) at *trichul dakshina* events (public initiation rituals) to young men from its youth wing, the Bajrang Dal. They were to be carried around shoulder and neck in the same way as the *kirpan* (a small dagger), one of the five key symbols of Khalsa identity. Sikhs further enjoy the reputation of being a community based upon ideals of high discipline and loyalty. In her exploration of the Sikh militant discourse, Veena Das argues that the Sikh martyr became an ideal-typical figure for someone who represented the community's fight for justice and 'whose sacrifices have fed the community with its energy'.[85] Interestingly, she also notes that popular martyrologies of Sikhism depict the Hindus as effeminate and weak, as people

who require protection, whereas the Muslims are portrayed as an aggressive opponent who is equally strong and martial in character as the Sikh.

Hindutva ideology and pragmatism employed similar strategies for political mobilization and sanctification of those who fell victim to 'unjust' governance. But visual and verbal rhetoric differ from real-political circumstances. With the underdog *kar sevak*, on which our attention is focused now, lying dead in the gutter, the video camera exposes the bloodstains that surround him and his body in all detail. The camera paints a picture of a deserted battlefield. It seems as if there is no alliance between ideal and status quo, even though the voice-over commentary in *We Can Give Up Our Lives . . .* attempts to create a sacred space and enhance rituals of sanctification in order to suggest post-mortem heroism. Worlds seem to lie between the staged, clean martyrdom on posters and in speeches and the actual scenes of conflict, where we see footage of *kar sevaks*' blood merging with the dirt in the gutter of a narrow alley. The notion of 'clean', heroic martyrdom had been quickly added to the dead *kar sevaks* of the clashes in Ayodhya in 1990, like layers of colour added onto a black and white memorial or wedding photograph in order to remove wrinkles on a face. The war lords who added this colour, have left the stage silently and with clean hands, smiling graciously while giving interviews on the aims and profits of sacrifices. A rather sad vision of salvation.

The short afterlife of the anonymous 'underdog'

> . . . the kar sevaks were shot at close range in the head and chest. This was uncalled for—and close-ups of their mangled bodies and spilled blood have provided wonderful propaganda material for the VHP and BJP.[86]

We Can Give Up Our Lives . . . composes and displays a detailed topography of dead bodies of *kar sevaks*. The camera-eye reveals a painfully close relationship in the devastated street scenes after the clashes of *kar sevaks* and paramilitary forces happened in Ayodhya on 2 November 1990. It delivers a detailed, almost intimate, study of bloodstains, wounds, cracked open skulls, open eyes of the dead, of mutilated bodies lying in the alleys of Ayodhya (Figures 81–84). Some shots show almost decomposed bodies after they had been dragged out of the holy river Saryu, where they—so the voice-over commentary explains—had been secretly dumped by the police and paramilitary forces in order to hide their violent actions. Accompanying these shots, one song speaks of thousands of uncounted heads being sacrificed and a voice demands: 'Take my head, too!' Instrumental, sad tunes accompany the images and increase the feeling of horror and tragedy. It is almost as if the camera's eye had become the viewer's eye, with no space for protection or chance for withdrawal between



Figure 81 Kar sevak. Still from *We Can Give Up Our Lives ...*



Figure 82 Ibid.



Figure 83 Ibid.



Figure 84 Ibid.

the two. Possibly, one could not get any closer to Walter Benjamin's analogy of the camera eye with the surgeon's operation tool.

In order to support the idea in the audiences that the acts of the government had not only been enacted against the supporters of the movement but also addressed the Indian people as a whole, interviewees emphasized ongoing suffering and announced further martyrdom. One man angrily addresses the camera, in tears because of the loss of his nephew who died in encounter with paramilitary and police forces at the *kar seva* of 1990 (see Figure 85). His relative, so he accuses, had been 'executed':

> What kind of government is this?! Was he not a citizen of India? Does the police not belong to us too?! We had come, prepared to die. It would have been all right if he had died on the street, fighting the police. But to be dragged out of a house and then shot, what kind of justice is this?!

Thus, the focus of governmental attention was on the *kar sevaks.* When police and paramilitary forces started firing at *kar sevaks* on 2 November, many RSS workers and Bajrang Dal activists sought refuge in homes of Sangh Parivar



Figure 85 Witness reporting on the clashes with police and paramilitary forces (Ibid.).

supporters. Yet paramilitary forces and police tracked some of them down, allegedly killing some of them when they refused to leave their hiding place. The video points out that the killings and the many rumours that accompanied them made the survivors even firmer in their dedication to support the Ayodhya movement—in remembrance of the victims. Returning to the pledge, Carl Ernst's statement that the rhetoric of martyrdom came to function as the 'final resort of the weak'[87] finds affirmation. One *kar sevak* in *We Can Give Up Our Lives . . .* promises, and in doing so comes close to the ideal-typical model of Baba Deep Singh: 'I set out to build the temple, to protect my religion . . . I won't go away until it's done!'

Doubts as to the actual voluntary and conscious nature of the self-sacrifice of these young men have been expressed earlier. The victims of 30 October and 2 November 1990 also became victims of Hindutva ideology in that they were instrumentalized as weapons in a battle that was not theirs. This is not to say that they were innocent. However, they had not come prepared to die as martyrs but to support the Sangh Parivar's call for the construction of a Ram temple at the site of the Babri mosque. Most of these young men came from upper castes and the urban lower middle class and were using Ayodhya as a stage to express their protest about the feared consequences of the Mandal Report that had been announced by Prime Minister V P Singh only two months before. They dreaded that the new quota policy, giving preference according to caste rather than economic status based on individual performance, would further fragment and destabilize society and at the same time diminish their own chances for an upwardly mobile career.[88] At least to some extent, the Ram *Rath Yatra* was organized in response to the Mandal implementation.

Many of the youth belonging to the Bajrang Dal appear on footage in *We Can Give Up Our Lives . . .* or *From Sagar to Saryu* gearing up in groups of a dozen or so to mobilize the public, on scooters or marching, carrying the Hindu flag and wearing a saffron band (*Ram patti*) around their heads (see Figure 15). That dedication is juxtaposed with dynamic images and metaphors of death and despair, shooting and running, shouting and screaming in *We Can Give Up Our Lives. . . .* Such scenes enabled the creation of an atmosphere of 'reality-TV'. With the footage taken by cameraman Rahul T, who also directed *GMH*, the viewers are drawn into the plot as if they were looking through a virtual peephole. The insertion of elements of sacredness and holy war into such an aesthetic and closeness were to enhance feelings of shock. And indeed, sound and images attack the eye and other senses. They come across in such a dense and intense manner that it is difficult to detach oneself. As Amit Aggarwal, in an article carried by the *Times of India*, says about the video: 'it hits you like a hammer on the head' (20 November 1990), or—put in the Benjaminian context—'goes under the viewer's skin'.

Compassion, mixed with anger, was meant to emerge in the viewer in response to these pictures. Points of emotive address appear not only in the detailed study of the anatomy of death. Footage of an old man being hit by police while he tries to peacefully make his way through the wall of state forces; of *sadhus* being kicked in their backs, or of eyewitness reports by relatives or friends of the dead, attempt to pull viewers into a space of humiliation and threat. The people talk as if traumatized, looking into the camera with pain-filled eyes. Real suffering and staged suffering are intertwined in montage, and repeatedly in the course of watching those scenes, an air of 'reality TV' got hold of my imagination and empathy. To me, these people are both 'real' and 'unreal'; they are sacred messengers of a glorious utopia, placed in an apocalyptic setting on earth. The images enforce notions of a community standing with its back against the wall, with nothing left to lose, for they have given—or lost — everything. The visual device of these montaged images, cutting the brutal scenes against idyllic, Arcadian images, enhance the feeling of having reached a limit where only the agency of self-sacrifice through death can lead to a solution. It seems that the BJP and Hindutva allies have created a space of death to enable transformation and mobilization in terms of agency, to be loaded with Benjaminian 'wish-images'.

The figure of the underdog martyr never really rises again—except in the video medium or speeches that turned him, *post mortem,* into a heroic martyr. Half a decade later, he has disappeared from those virtual spaces at the same speed as he had appeared in front of the audiences. However, our attention shall stay focused on the strategies of evolving a cult of martyrdom around him before he was finally made to silently vanish from centre-stage.

Creating a cult of martyrdom

> *There will be remembrance of all these kinds of people, certainly there will be. Of course, because they were the people instrumental to bringing this movement so far.*[89]

We Can Give Up Our Lives . . . reflects the interest of BJP and VHP spokespeople to employ the killings of 1990 for the creation of a cult of martyrdom. This new cult was meant to prolong and intensify the Sangh Parivar's emotive mobilization in the context of the Ayodhya controversy. The martyrs had been created post-mortem in order to be commodified as nationalist 'wish-images'. Yet they were pushed away at the moment when key ideologues and pragmatics felt that their appeal had diminished.[90]

Taking a closer look at *We Can Give Up Our Lives* . . ., it becomes evident that it is not the people who turned the *kar sevaks* into martyrs by evolving a cult through which they could honour and remember the dead by means of rituals, memorials, songs, poetry, popular stories and imagery. Heroes and heroic martyrs were tailored to fit into the pantheon of Hindutva by various VHP and BJP spokespeople to further provoke the secular government and to prove to the people that only the Sangh Parivar cared for and guaranteed the remembrance of the dead and acknowledged the distress of their families.

First, a rhetoric of revenge in the name of, and homage to, the death of 'innocent pilgrims' was staged by the BJP. The BJP journal *About Us* stated that the party's National Council

> . . . bows its head in tearful homage to the sacred memory of the Martyrs of Ayodhya. (. . .) The blood of the Ram-bhaktas shall not go in vain. (. . .) The BJP rededicates itself to the sacred task of rebuilding the Ram Janma Mandir at Ram Janmasthan and initiating the movement for establishment of Ram Rajya.[91]

We Can Give Up Our Lives . . . honoured the martyrs and survivors of the killings with slogans such as:'Don't forget the martyrs of Ayodhya!', 'Victory to the martyrs of Ayodhya' and songs filled with phrases like 'We bow our heads to the martyrs of Ayodhya who died at the banks of the river Saryu. The history of sacrifices for the birthplace is an eternal and glorious one'. The act of paying respect to the dead (*sradda*) was part and parcel of hero worship (*viryamarga*), one of the classic paths to salvation.[92] In order to be legitimate, the death of a heroic martyr has to be closely aligned with a ritually, 'good' death. It can be recognized as a meaningful, morally justified death when juxtaposed with the concept of suicide of an individual for alleged reasons of selfish despair and moral weakness. By means of a heroic death, followed by a proper death ritual (*narayanabali*), salvation can be reached directly.[93]

Second, a series of familiar rituals was employed and put on display for the viewer in *We Can Give Up Our Lives . . .* to suggest the Sangh's interest in the restoration of the martyr's lost honour. The video carries shots of voluntary workers pulling corpses of *kar sevaks* out of the holy river Saryu four days after the shootings. The voice-over commentary informs us that the military had secretly dumped the bodies in order to hide their acts. The weekly magazine *Frontline* reported that 'many had sandbags tied to them and bore bullet marks or other injuries . . . (and) lent credence to the suspicion that the police had dumped the dead in the river'.[94] This was dynamite for the Sangh Parivar. Not only could the findings accuse the police and paramilitary forces of having abused the state's power; the fact that the dead had not been given an adequate treatment in terms of funeral pyres and death rites, was particularly hurtful and provocative to Hindu people since the death rite is an essential performative element to enable the soul to leave the body in a purified state. Towards the end of the video, in a montage, we see people carrying some of the dead bodies to a funeral pyre (Figures 86–87). There is also some footage of burning funeral fires, indicating that the martyrs had finally received what they deserved. Finally, to further translate the cult of martyrdom onto a national level and to promote the Sangh Parivar as a movement that cared for its people, the VHP initiated particular pilgrimages. Here, the bones and ashes of the cremated were taken on a journey through the country in ritual pots (*asthi-kalasha)* before their obligatory immersion in sacred waters.[95]

Yet, this was only one version, the 'shiny' side, of the river-findings. Another side is revealed through the story of a former Jain Studios employee who wished to remain anonymous. He reports what he had witnessed when watching some documentary footage in post-production for *We Can Give Up Our Lives . . .* He points out that the final version of the video did not carry any of the footage depicting those bodies that had been pulled out of the river and presented to the video camera's eye, but had then been left by the riverside without the performance of death rituals for them. The bodies thus became food for hungry dogs and vultures. The informant furthermore states that precisely this footage, when he looked for it another day, had disappeared.[96] For the informant, despite his sympathies for the Hindutva cause, this was an evidence for the insincerity and false morality of some of the spokespeople within the Ramjanmabhoomi agitation.

The third aspect of the production of a cult was related to the acknowledgement of family members' agony in order to enhance Hindutva spokespeople's own authority. As in popular prints of the 1930s and 1940s, BJP and VHP spokespeople claimed the power to 'bless' both the volunteers and their families by metamorphosing into representatives of Mother India.



Figure 86 *Kar sevaks* receive their funeral rites (Ibid.).

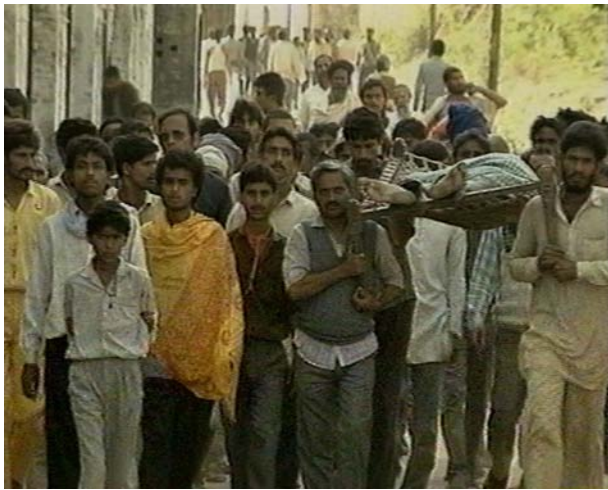


Figure 87 Ibid.

The pain of those families who had lost their sons and husbands was paid tribute to insofar as this gesture was considered to be profitable for the establishment of a cult of a charismatic leader. Thus, *We Can Give Up Our Lives. . .* informs the viewer about the inauguration of the *Ayodhya Martyrs Trust*. This trust was to provide support to the families of the dead *kar sevaks* and to keep the memory of the martyrs alive. Some footage also depicts speakers praising the 'sanctification of the killed souls' while other footage shows BJP

leaders paying their homage by means of stating that those martyrs contributed to a 'great victory for Hindu society'. The voice-over commentary appeals to *kar sevaks* to realize the dreams of the dead: 'We have to redeem their pledge and keep advancing'. The appeal that the martyrs' 'last will' seeks realization in the remembrance as well as the deeds of their successors, adds another dramatic element to the notion of the cult. The invocation of an idea that the dead might watch and judge the deeds of the living has already been used by Swami Vivekananda, one of Hindutva politics' favourite nationalist figures: 'Millions of your ancestors are watching, as it were, every action of yours, so be alert!'[97] Through the strategy of drawing upon the 'reciprocal' power of remembrance, Hindutva ideologues aimed at creating an anthropomorphic virtual memory as a controlling force. This 'invisible eye' or 'judge' from the past was intended to function as a tool of surveillance and to control citizens' performances.

In the late 1990s, the 'cult of remembrance' also expanded into the domain of the Internet. Parts of the *VHP Bharat* web site are dedicated to the two Kothari brothers who died during the shooting in Ayodhya in 1990 while attempting to hoist the Hindu flag on the central dome of the Babri mosque.[98] The photograph on display is a traditional memorial photograph, the montage of two studio portraits of the brothers, with *tilak* (sacred mark on the forehead) added and sashes displaying the words 'Bajrang Dal' to mark them as property of the VHP youth wing. Placed between the two is a print of Bharat Mata (Figure 88). The brothers are referred to as *hutatama*, the Sanskrit term for someone who sacrifices himself through fire ritual. The accompanying text



Figure 88 The two Kothari brothers. Photomontage (1990s). Private collection.

explains: 'Ram Kumar Kothari and Anuj Sharad Kothari. Felled by the bullets of *Mullah* Mulayam Singh Yadav's *goonda raj*'. Mullah is the Arabic term for priest, but also a Hindutva swear-word for Muslims in general. In this context, however, the connotation has to be related to the mentioning of the then chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, Yadav, who ordered the arrest of L K Advani during the Ram *rath yatra*, and imposed several bans on Sangh activities related to the Ayodhya controversy in the state. To increase feelings of loss and injustice in the viewers, a photograph of the Kothari brothers' parents has been placed directly beneath them.

Video as a courtroom for the 'people's verdict'

We Can Give Up Our Lives . . . increases the notion of martyrdom by continuing the tradition of popular martyrologies as both a 'moving memorial' and the documentation and celebration of martyrdom in form of an audiovisual eye witness report.

The videos discussed here did not only serve as 'moving memorials' but also as 'virtual courtrooms' (Chapter 5). Through them, Hindutva ideologues attempt to display the 'people's voice' and reach a 'just' verdict for the nation's welfare by appealing to the purported Truth. In the context of this chapter, the courtroom metaphor can also be employed with respect to the fact that hagiographies often evolve around proclaimed eye witness reports of the trials of a martyr, be they of Christian or Islamic (Sufi) belief.[99] Martyrologies are often set in a court-like context. Courts are the manifestation of the authority of law and order. In the case of verdicts spoken on a heroic martyr, courts serve as a stage for competing versions of truth and law. The martyr is both a witness to truth, faith and law and a representative of sacred justice.[100]

With regard to the Ayodhya controversy, contested views over the 'true' law found reflection in the video *The Truth Shall Not Be Touched*. Here, the interpretations of *dharmic* law by the Hindutva spokespeople were played out against those of secular law by the nation-state. The video is made up as a book that opens to various chapters of the Ayodhya case. Like in a court-case, claims and 'evidences' are presented to the viewer. Footage is accompanied by the authority of written, 'true' words and documents, that is, comments by 'eminent' archaeologists and historians, and quotes from historical sources such as eyewitness reports. Consensus within the audience was attempted through a voice-over claiming that 'the people of India' should be the actual judges of the case. They should create the fate of the nation: 'You have to decide, countrymen, can we continue like this? That's *suicidal*! Or shall we—on the basis of national history—lay the foundation for a new brotherhood? No appeasement for anyone!' The video has come to serve as a medium to stage a passion-play as both a testimony and a court scene. Although the voice-over

commentary claims that the video takes up the position of a 'neutral' observer, in fact, the authority or rather the dogma of voice-over commentary, songs and images openly push the viewer to such an extent that the demand for the construction of Ram's birth-temple at the spot of the mosque must be the only logical consequence.

The last page of this 'video-as-book' closes with shots of *kar sevaks* climbing the dome of the mosque. To end the video with this symbolic gesture of claiming foreign and alien territory does not require words of explanation. It also enables us to draw a link to the flag-hoisting scene in *Unity Pilgrimage* (Chapter 4) in which, symbolically, Kashmir as a 'dominated site', is transformed into a 'dominant site'. The verdict, so it seems, has already been reached and executed.

The legendary appeal of martyrdom and sanctity of violence, and the invocation of the 'people's power' to reach a just verdict, show that the videos discussed here are in many ways what Michael Taussig calls the 'work of fabulation'. For Taussig, it was the ways in which fabulation or 'magical realism': 'created an uncertain reality out of fiction, giving shape and voice to the formless form of "reality" in which an unstable interplay of truth and illusion becomes a phantasmic social force'.[101] It is important to note, however, on the basis of Michael Taussig's work on colonialism, that it is both magical realism's potential as an emancipating and ideological tool through which the dreams and desires of the colonized were to be disciplined and controlled.[102]

In our case, the underdog martyr stands at the crossroads of the dialectic relationship between the 'real' and the 'unreal', the mythic and the historical, self-empowerment and disciplining control. This potential is emphasized through the style of montage in the videos, where the medium opens up a space to think of and visualize imaginative forces of agency, to make the invisible visible (suffering, dedication, devotion, etc.). Video technology's potential to make visible the invisible was thus reversed in the domain of actuality: the visible (*kar sevak* as underdog) became invisible.

Fulfilling the dreams of the ancestors: the 'serene' martyr

Getting rid of the ghosts of the past

While the videos discussed so far have relied on the image of the 'underdog' martyr to evoke and transform feelings of passivity and victimization into active resistance in what is described as a justified battle against the 'pseudo-secular' government, the following video example of 1997 celebrating and commemorating fifty years of Indian Independence from a Hindutva prospective, introduces a different role model for 'dynamic devotion'. Here, the heroic martyr came to be employed solely as a distant 'wish-image' on

which to contemplate, a commodified fetish for 'mundane' desires stripped of any notion of selfless (head-)sacrifice. One reason for this is that the BJP did not intend to present the Indian people and itself as standing with the back to the wall, but wanted instead to celebrate Indian culture and history. In this context, the gloomy martyrdom in the gutters of Ayodhya metamorphosed into a festive 'pop-martyrdom'.

With the demolition of the Babri mosque on 6 December 1992, the army of martyrs invoked in the figure of the *kar sevak* vanished like a ghost from a bottle. Even the Ayodhya videos were either removed from the shelves of shops selling Hindutva paraphernalia or collected thick layers of dust. Yet, in many of the interviews with members of the VHP or RSS in Delhi it became evident that the footage of the killings documented in the videos was still alive in their memories.

But the perspective on both events and the site itself had changed. Most of the informants stated that the communal violence that had accompanied the Ayodhya controversy had negative effects, especially on the international reputation of the BJP. Within the Sangh Parivar, opinions about the violent excesses and their representation diverged. VHP-supporters tended to blame the BJP for the violent outbursts, stating that peace would have possibly prevailed had the agitation preserved a predominantly religious focus. They criticized the BJP for having abused the Ayodhya controversy for election purposes. Likewise, members of the BJP blamed the *kar sevaks*, reducing them to a fanatic mob of uncontrolled angry young men. The dispute on the degree of BJP leaders' involvement in and thus responsibility for the orchestration of the demolition is still ongoing.

The 'B-grade', or 'underdog' martyrs have meanwhile been replaced by superior figures, 'serene' heroic martyrs that have come to enjoy wide public acknowledgement, particularly as regards their involvement in the Freedom Struggle. Many of their lives have already been portrayed in the various media of popular culture (comics, TV-software, commercial movies etc.). In the post-Ayodhya context, mobilization came to be associated with the act of sacrificing oneself for a life-time by incorporating ideal modes of conduct in one's habitus, rather than giving up life as such. 'On sale' for personal identification was a whole set of 'clean' heroic martyrs. A spokesperson from the BJB media cell in the party's New Delhi headquarters commented, when asked about the difference between the martyrs of the Ayodhya movement and those of the post-Ayodhya BJP, particularly those employed in the *Swarna Jayanti Rath Yatra*, a nation-wide event staged in 1997: 'There can be no sane comparison between the martyrs of the freedom struggle and those who died in the Ayodhya movement'.[103] Inherent in this quote, read in the context of the previous analysis of *We Can Give Up Our Lives*... is the idea that hierarchies of martyrdom

are flexible. It seems as if the 'underdog' was good enough for mobilization in times of crisis. However, he seems to have lacked 'sophistication' in terms of a symbolic glorification of Indian straggle against colonialism, on an ephemeral rather than action-oriented basis.

The most recent political video called *Swarna Jayanti Rath Yatra—A Documentary Film on Lal Krishna Advani's Patriotic Pilgrimage* commissioned by the BJP in 1997[104] was just such a piece of education and glorification of Indian heroism. Addressing party workers and potential sympathizers, the video aimed at telling its viewers what the individual responsibilities and duties of an Indian citizen were: preserving and enhancing national identity by following and promoting the *dharmic* principles of Hindutva. In this political 'national-devotion pilgrimage' (*deshbhakti ki teerth yatra*) conducted throughout India by the then BJP party president L K Advani, from May to July 1997, the ideal citizen's identity was now anchored by means of appealing to a series of carefully selected martyrs and heroes of Indian history, especially from the period of anti-colonial struggle.

The concept of Indianness had come to be based upon the commemoration of the alleged ideals and dreams of the martyrs, the sanctification of land through their deeds and deaths and the future concept of building a 'temple of the nation' (*rashtra mandir*) to be individually internalized. An appeal to the image of the devotee opening his chest to reveal his innermost beliefs rather than to head-sacrifice. The selection of martyrs for this new pantheon was based on the slogan of 'unity in diversity'. Footage shows that portraits of Bhagat Singh and his comrade Chandrashekar Azad next to Veer Savarkar and RSS-leader K B Hedgewar, and Muslim martyr Ashfaqullah Khan next to martyr Veerapandya Kattabomman from Tamil Nadu in South India were mounted on Advani's chariot. A portrait of Mohandas K Gandhi, representing the 'moderates' in the freedom movement, was put right next to a portrait of 'extremist' Lokamanya Tilak (Figure 89). One large hoarding was attached to the back of the *rath*: a picture of Bharat Mata, the only woman in this assembly.

In 'real life' these men would have probably fought, or at least argued, against this eclectic projection of cultural nationalism as 'unity in diversity'. Yet, in this context, they are all part and parcel of the same fraternity. The accompanying text to the video stated that the *yatra* itself, as well as the video, had a noble cause. It is: 'a journey that reminds the *yatri* (pilgrim) of the nation's continuing civilizational journey. This ritual is one of the key elements that ensured the survival of Indian civilization, helping it to preserve its continuity in time and its capacity to weave unity in all its seemingly maddening diversity'.[105]

There were noticeable stylistic changes in this video too. There was no longer an involvement with special effects and miracle scenes as with the



Figure 89 Swarna Jayanti Rath Yatra, panels of martyrs. Press photograph from the BJP Headquarters in New Delhi. 1997.

story of Lord Rama's epiphany. A new space had been entered in which a variety of stories could be told about the respective lives of the chosen martyrs and heroes. Watching the video is almost like walking through a theme park or a tourist package tour, the 'video *yatri*' can pick and choose according to his or her likings, go 'Ah!—That's the Andamans, where Veer Savarkar was imprisoned!', or 'Look! Mahatma Gandhi's Ashram!' The tactics of name-, site- and image-dropping seem to have replaced narratives of the kind we encountered in montage or special effects, the god posters, and docu-drama scenes of Jain Studios videos. This linear diary of the *yatra* has only one song about the patriotism of the party conveying the need of every citizen to tune into the mantra of individual responsibility towards the national community. Even the song is not related to the format of *bhajans* but is composed like a march. The chorus has a faster, 'modern' rhythm, one that appeals to the viewer to join in with this convoy of triumph and glory. This is an exhibition of the glory of Indianness, India's history, her dams, her cultural traditions, the sea, the mountains. In sum, everything has become an integral part of a country made up of patriotic people willing to sacrifice their life for the motherland. The video does not want to be the bridge to or messenger of a battlefield but to open the doors to a colourful museum of national pride and honour. The bloodstains of the 'underdog' martyr have faded. Now it is a serene and noble martyr who carries a halo of historical grandeur. The BJP presents itself as a party with a 'clean shirt', with nothing to hide. The 'underdog martyr' fell victim to those politics of self-censorship.

How was the 'new' and shining martyr contested, and what was contested through him? By holding that India was once again falling into the trap of another form of invasion, that is, alleged cultural degeneration and onslaught from the West, images of the fight for independence came to be presented through the portrayal of freedom fighters as ideal patriots. India should be strong, confident and independent on the basis of her economic and cultural sovereignty, as well as native concepts of governance. Appealing to the visions of those men embraced by the cult of the death, L K Advani asks:

> Why have their dreams of New India remained unfulfilled even after 50 years of freedom? What would the patriots and martyrs of the freedom struggle think if they were to see India of today, her polity steeped in corruption and her society reeling under poverty and social disharmony?[106]

Instead of promoting itself as a party of the Hindu majority, the BJP has now chosen to broaden its rhetoric and appeal to a wider audience. By turning itself into a speaker of an India that could be great and confident but is caught up in corruption scandals, ethnic violence and economic underdevelopment, the party suggests to have stepped out of the shade of communal politics. We now encounter a multi-faceted Arcadian India, one of enlightened freedom fighters, usually already familiar figures within school curricula, ready-made for consumption on posters to be found in every party office or other public building. The new 'A-grade' heroes are assembled in an eclectic style, no matter whether they were Socialists, Anarchists, Marxists or supporters of the much-criticized Gandhian version of *ahimsa*. I asked Rohit M (RM) about this arbitrariness of references to heroes that seems to me both the essence and irony of the BJP-slogan 'unity in diversity':

> CB: What does it imply—that the BJP just wants to whitewash the people and their biographies and try to incorporate them into their kind of notion of cultural identity? What happened? Or does it mean that they've actually become 'Leftists', or that they promote Socialism?
>
> RM: Socialist or non-Socialist, I don't think this matters. Once you are in the process of changing that identity question, this is what I say, the day the Leftists or the Congress people will go for the *kar seva*, this question is going to change. That day it's going to happen.[107]

Even though 'that day' has yet not arrived, the notion of martyrdom in the late 1990s had changed its frame of reference. Being so close to state power, the BJP required a different profile for agitation. Therefore, it adopted nationally recognized figures who, whether or not they had actively promoted and engaged in violence, could be associated with heroic resistance to colonization. This

threat was not only coming from outside the geographical boundaries of India. It was also situated further in the past than the Ayodhya controversy and was univocally opposed by all segments of Indian society.

This example shows too that there is no fixed definition of martyrdom. Rather, the strength of the model lies in its flexibility, to make and unmake martyrs according to context and intention within a specific discourse of power.

Happy endings for heroic martyrs?

Like Bharat Mata, the Hindutva martyr, as he was displayed in the videos, is an imaginary rather than a real figure, a model to think, perform and define borders with. He dwells in a sphere where concepts of tradition and modernity, religion and politics are constantly transgressed and negotiated along inclusive and exclusive categories such as inside and outside, legitimate and illegitimate, tolerant and aggressive. Through the martyr, Hindutva spokespeople sought to leverage ideas of displacement and imaginary homelands, imprisonment and resistance of the Hindu people. With the idea of suffering and crisis located around and within him, he was turned into a hero who was said never to surrender, even at the cost of his own life. On the contrary, the martyr was to even overcome and transform the suffering of the group he represented and had emerged from. Not only did the figure of the martyr function as a 'wish-image'. He was also attributed with the role of a witness to as well as participant in Hindutva's battle between truth and injustice, fighting and, if needed, dying for the welfare of society/the nation. Thus, he could become a bearer of truth and of better times to come.

The notion of martyrdom came to be central to the rhetoric of Hindutva ideology and political presentation, in that the martyr could be employed as a fetish of nation building, especially as regards crisis-constitution. Dressed up and staged by Hindutva ideologues as 'protagonist' within narratives of Hindu victimization and agitation, the martyr was a mixture of saint and politician as well as mythical warrior. It is important to point out here that martyr and victim have never been clearly distinguished as different categories *per se*. Rather, the borders between them oscillate.[108] A martyr's role would be less efficient could he not be presented as a fearless hero, a pioneer or revolutionary, and could his example not be employed to link 'reality' and 'utopia', past and present, history and myth. On the basis of his legendary appeal, the martyr was often woven into a dense net of popular stories turning him into a charismatic mystic, a prophet or messiah-like figure surrounded by miracles and spectacle.

In the 'Hindutva martyr', various concepts of self-sacrifice are fused, ranging from an appropriation of the martial hero (Sikhism) to the non-violent *satyagrahi*. By means of establishing a cult of martyrdom, Hindutva

representatives attempted to reshape history, address conflicts of the present, and project models of agency, norms and values, for a 'better' future. Martyrdom and violence are closely intertwined, for violence against an alleged threat can thus be sanctified, and legitimised. The martyr, representing the utmost realisation of self-sacrifice for a particular cause, is an essential element within Hindutva rhetoric. This also became evident in the course of this Chapter, when the shifting frames for the production and interpretation of martyrdom were addressed as they respond to a change in the political landscape.

Are the times of holy wars over? The late 1990s witnessed issue-less national politics, unstable governments and coalitions and a politically fragmented landscape due to increasing regionalization. Most of all, it seems that particularly due to the Ayodhya controversy and the violence linked to it, many Indians have lost their confidence in both the religious as well as the political leaders of pan-Indian status. At a time when a party such as the BJP aims at appealing to all segments of society, a cult of 'underdog' martyrs, associated with communal violence and conflict between people and government, seems unable to translate stability and harmony. Furthermore, this cult had addressed only a small portion of Hindu people for the purpose of brief and action-loaded mobilization in order to increase feelings of utmost crisis. They were, to recall Rohit M' s comment on the 25 per cent of men in the 'offensive mood', the *kar sevaks* allegedly pushed into a 'backs-against-the-wall' situation.

However, alongside great heroic martyrs, Mother India still seems to demand sacrifices from her 'ordinary' sons for the sake of her freedom and honour. This finds reflection in a statement by a BJP media expert: 'If the need arises, genuine patriots will certainly be called upon to lay down their lives for the nation'.[109] In April 1998, the BJP formed a coalition government. Shortly after, it was at the brink of a war with Pakistan over the matter of Kashmir. Once again, the idea of heroic civic martyrdom came to pave the way for the parliamentary elections of autumn 1999. Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's speech on Independence Day 1999 was spiked with the rhetoric of martyrdom for the nation's welfare, thanking those soldiers who had bravely given their lives in the war, consoling and blessing their families, and appealing to the Indian people to further support those men who became the new 'heroes of the nation'. Camouflaged as a contemplative reflection on the century, but actually an ode to battles and martyrdom, Vajpayee's statement read:

> As we stand at the sunset of the twentieth century and look back at the events of the era that has passed, we see the end of colonialism from Indian soil to be the most important development. Our great leaders, and many generations of our countrymen, waged a powerful struggle for independence. By doing so, they paved the way for the independence of

> other countries, too. We pay homage to those self-sacrificing and devoted leaders and patriots who struggled for freedom throughout their lives, and, when necessary, even laid down their lives as *aahuti* (offering) in the great *yagya* (sacrifice) of freedom.[110]

Whether the 'martyrs of Kashmir' are 'A-' or 'B-grade' martyrs remains to be seen. What seems important in this case is that heroic civic martyrdom has become a 'classical' device in the context of a nationalist rhetoric of freedom and sovereignty. The idea serves as a handy tool for ideologues and pragmatists alike to project models of action and to temporarily assemble and constitute a community. This in turn requires a credible and emotive narrative based on metaphors of familial loyalty, martial masculinity and sacred violence versus ongoing battles and oppression by external and internal threats to freedom. It remains to be seen if and when Mother India's forgotten sons will be called upon again. The props and script may then have changed. But the rhetoric of heroic Martyrdom, battle and satisfied revenge may will be drawn upon again.

EPILOGUE: 'MAKING INDIA A *DHARMIC* SUPERPOWER'[1]

> We (the BJP) have tried to marry technology with tradition, and to send a very strong message to all those in India and abroad who used to think and propagate this falsehood, that if the BJP comes to power, being an obscurantist party, it would take India back to the eighteenth century. And we are trying to tell the people that being the first party to go on the Internet—and to go on the Internet in the manner that *we* have done it, we have proved that *we* alone have the perspective for the 21st century; to make India a strong information power, that India *can* harness this technology, it *can* communicate *confidently* through this new medium.[2]

This statement by one of the BJP's media experts is representative of the 'New BJP', 'the party with a difference', as the political wing of Hindutva promoted itself from the late 1990s onwards. To some extent, in projecting a new national confidence, Kulkarni's comment is reflective of the international recognition that India has gained in recent years on the basis of her software expertise, thereby changing the dominant image of India as an economically backward country into that of an equal player "in the new world order"[3]. Information technology thus became the flagship, or synonym, for the scientific and rational spirit of the 'new BJP's' claim to nationality; like video, it ties the power of political representation to economic and technological development. This was an approach through which the BJP attempted both to widen its appeal among the middle classes and economic elite (in India and abroad) and to project a non-communal agenda, thereby pushing onto centre stage the importance of further economic liberalization and globalization for the nation state.

The final section of this book explores some of the crucial markers of the political landscape as well as the media landscape of Hindu Right rhetoric that constituted the making of 'empowering visions' around the turn of the millennium. While the focus of this study has been the role of the new audiovisual media of video in the 'first wave' of Hindutva cultural nationalism as a major political player, this epilogue seeks to examine some key events and issues, such as territorial loyalty, and martyrdom, on one level, or the development of the media landscape, on another level. These are discussed with respect to some recent developments. Particularly significant in this context is the return in 2002 of the 'extreme' Hindu Right to the public arena since the year 2002.

Where can Jain Studios be placed in this context? In many ways, Kulkarni's statement reflects some of the key concerns raised by J K Jain in the late 1980s in relation to India's self-assertion through new media technologies, as well as the neoliberal economic policies that had been embraced by the BJP after it formed the central government in the multi-party coalition of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in 1998. J K Jain's visionary ideals once helped to pave the way for the formation of the BJP, as he was one of the major players who brought to the party's attention the potential of increasing its public profile through the creation of an alternative media landscape. Yet, Jain Studios' high point in terms of political propaganda derives from, and ends with, the first phase of Hindutva revivalism (1989 to the mid-1990s), when the BJP was still in the opposition; in this period only a few other players proved to be able to compete with Jain Studios' technological equipment and personal alliances. Jain Studios' videos and distribution facilities relied on and were exploited by the BJP, as well as the RSS or the VHP, precisely at a time when emotive mobilization among militant grassroots organisations in the Sangh Parivar were required, for example for the Ayodhya agitation and electoral campaigns. Furthermore, in the late 1980s and even the early 1990s, Jain Studios provided the BJP with an opportunity to both circumvent Doordarshan's broadcast monopoly and to gain unique access to potential new voting groups, that is, the urban middle classes. With the creation of a highly diverse and competitive mediascape in the 1990s, the Jain production house came to be increasingly pushed to the periphery of political media activities (Chapter 1).[4] At the same time, the BJP pulled in new software producers who were technologically more advanced and/or had managed to position themselves within the dynamic flow of political networks that were based on personal affinities and regional agendas. New ways and means of communication and representation, such as the Internet, satellite television and a whole range of new private television channels in India augmented this shift which, once again, predominantly affected an urbanized, middle class India.[5]

Very much like the video medium in the late 1980s, the Internet is now being recognized as a potential 'think-space' and 'link-space' through which the party could combine the idea of technological advancement with social and ethical commitment, imbued with the utopian vision of 'transnational Indianness' as a 'dharmic superpower'. This is illustrated by the press release of the BJP issued on the day the official BJP website was launched in January 1998:

> Internet is one of the greatest wonders of this century, which has laid the basis for transforming every facet of work, culture, democracy, economy, entertainment, and communication in the next century. India needs to master and popularize this technology to further its civilizational goal of peace, prosperity, and universal brotherhood.[6]

And in an article on India's new role in 2001, then Prime Minister Vajpayee emphasises the nation's economic strength, particularly in the field of information and communications technologies, as an "epicentre of this Knowledge Revolution".[7] It seems, however, that with respect to the capacity of the electronic media to transform society as well as its actual inaccessibility to a majority of people in India, the Internet works as a metaphor or a luxurious, shining emblem of a few rather than an extensive, uniting social force.[8] Yet the above comment indicates the awareness that those who control the means of representation determine the meaning, or at least impact on the production of meaning, for example, when it comes to defining nationality. Here, far more important and influential with respect to Hindutva's political transformation and representation in the 1990s is the fact that, upon forming the new government, the BJP could now promote its agenda through the exploitation of the national broadcast network Doordarshan as well as influencing the media landscape in general. Besides information and communication technologies, education and the social sciences have become the principal tools to spread and affirm Hindutva principles on a nationwide and day-to-day level (as well as acting against and subverting the work of those who do not conform with the 'common will'). Hindu Right ideologues and activists were placed in key positions that constitute crucial monopolies of knowledge production and distribution in the nation state, for example the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, the Indian Council of Historical Research and the National Council for Education, Research and Training with its ideological *National Curriculum Framework*. What had been previously endeavoured on a much smaller scale by Jain Studios videos and other means of popular culture in terms of spreading ideas on the 'remapping of space and territory' (Chapter 4) and the 'rewriting of history' (Chapter 5) could therefore be legitimized and institutionalized through governmental policies.[9]

The marginalization of Jain's media empire in the sphere of Hindutva politics was thus to some extent connected to changes in economic policies, media technologies, and political rhetoric and in the new central position of the BJP itself. Besides major shifts taking place in the media landscape, there have been changes in the context of politics and ideology, affecting Hindutva. Following the demolition of the Babri mosque on December 2, 1992, the BJP seemed to become involved in a process of 'self-secularization and self-democratization', a process that was further increased after 1998. In public, the Prime Minister's Office in particular distanced itself from its previous demand for a Hinduization of politics, presenting the BJP-led government as a speaker for each and every segment of Indian society. In order to decrease the party's reputation as a communalist organization, the temple-mosque dispute was put on the backburner, and the BJP appealed to Muslims on the basis of familial solidarity. Yet, as I have explained in this study, if the vocabulary of

inclusion and exclusion surrounding Indian nationhood can be credibly employed in order to evoke anxieties and feelings of crisis, even 'brothers' can be transformed into traitors and made to appear threatening. The latter part of the 'Muslim psyche' was overtly and repeatedly appropriated by VHP speakers such as Praveen Togadia whose fiery speeches made those of hardliners like Advani appear almost harmless. Referring to the Muslims as essential treacherous, conditions of 'membership' to the Indian nation were taken over from the time when the BJP was still in the opposition. Muslims may become part of the Indian brotherhood if they openly declared and demonstrated a particular consensus, loyalty and way of life of the Hindu mainstream, for example, the essentialized selfless devotion for Bharat Mata and Lord Ram as national icons (*deshbhakti*); or leave the country. These ties that bind individuals to abstract visions of society are then able to pull in specific issues, such as the reconstruction of the Ram Temple or the claims to Kashmir or national security in general. However, since the international developments triggered off by the September 11, 2001 events – that is, the 'War against Terrorism' led by the USA – the 'new' aggressive Muslim stereotype that has been projected of the 'jihadi' or holy warrior, has been successfully incorporated into Hindutva rhetoric. Under the banner of a 'confrontation between civilization and barbarism', it legitimizes new arguments related to the Hindu need for assets and to defend himself, even through violence.[10]

While the BJP in the central NDA-government in New Delhi had to engage in a strategy of creating consensus among a heterogeneous range of regional political players, such as the AIADMK in Tamil Nadu or the Telugu Desam Party in Andhra Pradesh, and develop a political and economic agenda that responded to everyday issues such as unemployment, water shortage, electricity or corruption, the hardliners within the Sangh Parivar became increasingly impatient. On various occasions they expressed their expectation that a tentatively more moderate leader like Vajpayee must hold on to the main premises of Hindutva ideology, and that L K Advani, then Home Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, must keep his promise to build the Ram temple on the site of the demolished Babri mosque.[11] The display of internal pressures and fragmentation—based on both the mutual 'teamwork' among and heterogeneity within the Sangh Parivar—gave rise to a new fields of conflict. In 2002, this contributed to a revival of a hardline version of Hindutva in the public domain.

Ayodhya revisited

It is worth pointing out that, even within the Sangh Parivar itself, consensus about the definition of nationhood and its translation into political practice

was at stake. At the time of the completion of my fieldwork, the BJP had just won the parliamentary elections—not with a single majority, but in coalition with other, predominantly regional parties. The task of pleasing the various representatives of this coalition government was, until it was voted out of power in 2004, only one of the problems confronting the BJP in government.[12] Equally difficult to handle were the tensions arising from the close ties of loyalty towards, and dependency on the support of, the non-parliamentary organizations in the Sangh Parivar, especially during election times when the BJP depended on the support of its 'family members'. In return, these organizations tried to impact on the BJP-led government. For example, the VHP announced at a *Dharma Sansad* in Allahabad that it would commence reconstruction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya on March 15, 2002. Referring to the alleged verdict of the (Hindu) people's court, it consciously ignored the fact that the BJP-led government could not support the reconstruction without the necessary ruling of the Supreme Court. Once more, the Ayodhya controversy came to be a political tool to put pressure on a government, even though this government was, to some extent an ally. While moderates within the BJP and even the RSS argue that the Ayodhya Issue has outlived its charismatic appeal for electoral politics, hardliners propose that it is the Temple Issue that can prevent the BJP's decline of credibility, particularly after it suffered dramatic losses during state assembly elections in February and March 2002. In their view, Prime Minister Vajpayee's governance had become too soft-spoken and had made too many compromises with the regional players of the NDA. Vajpayee was particularly criticized for his reluctant stand on the issue of the temple construction in Ayodhya.[13] Furthermore, while the dispute over the construction of a temple at the site of the destroyed Babri mosque was still pending in the Supreme Court, the once seemingly homogenous 'Ayodhya movement' had increasingly moved towards fragmentation and inner conflict.[14] In August 2002, for example, Baba Dharam Das, caretaker of a major temple in Ayodhya, accused the VHP of 'go[ing] astray and us[ing] the temple card only to fill their coffers', while others blamed the VHP for exploiting the religious feelings of *sadhus*.[15] Growing differences within a particular organizational body and the alienation felt among non-parliamentary institutions with respect to parliamentary allies added a bitter taste to the power politics. This detachment of the 'base' from the 'head' is mirrored in the following excerpt from an interview with the chairman of the Sri Ram Janmabhoomi Trust, Mahant Ram Chandra Das Paramhans. Asked by the journalist: 'Are you not bothered about the fall of a friendly government?', Paramhans responded: 'I am not bothered whether the government falls or stays in power. It is not a friendly government. In fact, I am deeply shocked at the attitude of BJP leaders. They came to power in the name of Lord Ram. But they have now forgotten Ram. A BJP government is today

committing atrocities on Hindus'.[16] This comment reflects the perception shared among Sangh hardliners that, once stripped of its ideological premises, Hindutva politics was reduced to a blind business and had lost its principles.

To re-establish solidiarity among the non-parliamentary players within the Sangh Parivar, even at the risk of widening the conflict with the BJP at the centre, a new wave of event-based agitation was felt to be the only solution. Particularly the VHP banked on the Ayodhya issue again, appealing to the stereotypes of hurt Hindu sentiment and aggressive Muslim psyche. Ayodhya thus remains an important trope for Hindu Right propaganda; actual support among the people has been ambiguous, to say the least.[17]

New tasks and fields of conflict during crises of legitimacy

The new post-1998 field of political discourse on nationality has been so greatly extended that Hindu nationhood and self-empowerment could remain at the forefront of governance imbued with the politics of Hindutva cultural nationalism. Within the NDA, the BJP tried to present itself as a strong and confident national and even international leader in several incidents. This accomplished what Schiffauer outlines as two requirements of representation that enable the constitution of social collectives.[18] Firstly, an image has to be designed and staged that appeals to supporters. In our case, the image is that of the strong and virile nation state—provoked, if not dominated, by external threats, but unwilling to succumb to such challenges. Secondly, a speaker has to be delegated who offers scope for manifold forms of identification. This figure was Atal Behari Vajpayee, who combined aspects of 'moderate' RSS views with a reinterpretation of Jawaharlal Nehru's political ethics and visions of India as a neoliberal 'superpower'.

The BJP realized that in terms of presenting the state as strong and confident, other dramatic events could capture the attention of the people, the imagination of other political parties, and to a large exent, consensus. One incident that constituted the imagined nation as a temporarily united brotherhood were the nuclear tests launched in May 1998, only a month after the new government was sworn in. The tests, which led to US sanctions on India, created a new narrative based on the gulf between a 'Third World' country and a global player like the USA. This polarization, which revolved around the familiar context of an external 'threat' imbued with the rhetoric of anti-colonialism versus imperialism, as well as the long-standing conflict with neighbouring Pakistan enabled the BJP to present itself as appealing to a trans-communal nationality. The controversial past of the BJP and its link to orthodox organizations of the Sangh was temporarily sidelined. Furthermore, tensions in the coalition government and among opposition parties were for

some time overcome, as those different players assembled under the imaginary umbrella of a strong, centralized nation state.

Another area of conflict through which the idea of national crisis and resolution was staged was the escalation in tensions between India and Pakistan on the matter of national sovereignty and cross-border militancy surrounding the disputed Line of Control in Kashmir. A chain of events triggered off a new spiral of rhetoric against neighbouring Pakistan and the purportedly aggressive nature of the neighbouring Islamic nation state: these included the Kargil crisis in summer 1999, the terrorist attack on the Indian parliament in New Delhi in December 2001, and the massacre of more than thirty Hindu devotees in the Akshardham Swaminarayan temple in Gandhinagar in September 2002. In all these cases, Vajpayee could secure the support of the NDA and parties in the opposition, such as the Congress (I). Furthermore, he could obtain the sympathies of a majority of the Indian people, who felt that so-called cross-border terrorism increasingly eroded national stability and sovereignty.[19] These events indicate that the mobilization of support for the Hindu Right is still based on crisis, battle and martyrdom as well as a polarization of ethnic communities, and, as we shall see, embedded in an ongoing process of affirmation and reinterpretation.

'Old wine in new bottles': The Muslim stereotype

The recent revival of the hardline Hindu Right is once more based on the recreation of fears of attack among the (Hindu) population as well as the desire to reconstitute or defend Hindu pride. Print and audiovisual media have once more become the vehicles of an event-based rhetoric of Hindutva ideology, creating a dense net of 'virtual actuality' that, like the political videos by Jain Studios, 'goes under the skin', impacting on a subtle but enduring presence of threatening images that were now related to international (Islamic) terrorism.

The relationship between Pakistan and India in the context of the international 'War against Terrorism' shifted the attention of national and international critics away from India's internal tensions. These included the growing crisis of the BJP's credibility in several Indian states (particularly in Uttar Pradesh) and the outburst of hate speech and physical violence against Muslims in the aftermath of September 11, 2001, particularly from RSS and VHP outfits. After the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York, political alliances on the subcontinent took a different turn altogether. The Pakistani government gained political footage by becoming a close ally of the USA in the Afghanistan war and by declaring its support in the battle against terrorism. Yet cross-border infiltration continued at Kashmir's Line of Control, training camps of militants in 'Pakistan occupied Kashmir' were not removed,

and those defined as 'terrorists' on the Indian side enjoyed the title 'freedom fighter' in Pakistan. India argued that it suffered under the same kind of terrorism as the USA, only its suffering had still not been acknowledged.

With respect to India's national politics, the events of September 2001 enforced a new rhetoric based on the blurring between a discourse of cultural difference à la Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilisations* (1996) and Veer Savarkar's concept of the 'threat of Islam', to the Hindu motherland. The Hindu Right now found international affirmation in its claim that Islam was essentially aggressive, whether coming from across the borders of the Indian nation-state or within the nation's body, and thus must be challenged and pacified. Previously unthinkable political coalitions among nation states were formed, based solely on the fear that militant Islamic organizations could act out terrorist attacks in their respective countries. Civil society and civil rights had to bear the consequences for a new, controlled public sphere that was grounded on metaphors of collective threat. In India, 'new' players claimed more space on the political stage, recharging the public with communal tension and hatred. One such figure, in tandem with and backed by RSS, VHP and BJP hardliners, is Chief Minister of Gujarat, Narendra Modi, himself a former RSS *pracharak* and organizer of several BJP processions (Figure 41; see also Chapters 2 and 3).

Since 1992, the majority of Muslims in India had become increasingly cautious, if not anxious, about their appearance as a religious minority in public. Yet, this caution has not helped them: in the aftermath of an attack—allegedly executed by an enraged Muslim mob—on an express train in Godhra, Gujarat, on February 27, 2002, about 58 people were burnt to death, mostly *kar sevaks* returning from Ayodhya.[20] For weeks to follow, widespread pogroms against Muslims occurred in the state, leaving behind an estimated unofficial number of 1,000 to 3,000 dead, about 250,000 homeless, and tens of thousands of refugees, cramped together in relief camps from which many did not dare to return to their homes due to threats from Hindu Right organizations. Reports from various human rights organizations and other independent committees have found that members of the Bajrang Dal and other Sangh Parivar outfits were involved in the pogroms against Muslims, looting shops, raping women, threatening and killing people.[21] Narendra Modi has been accused of complicity in the riots.[22] Yet, despite this, analysts pointed out that he remained protected due to support from senior leaders in the government, VHP and RSS.[23] The surprisingly victorious outcome of the BJP in the Assembly Elections of December 2002 has proved that the elections were won on the basis of creating fear that further 'terrorist attacks' would take place in the light of the Godhra carnage and that instead Muslims had to be 'taught a lesson' if they wanted to remain in India.[24]

This success was partly based on strategies that had been 'tested' in previous campaigns and media forms, employing narratives and images that invoke cartographies and sites of fear (of threatening Islam) as well as martyrdom (of the Hindu brotherhood, in particular the Godhra victims who were turned post-mortem into 'underdog martyrs'). At events like the *Gaurav Yatra* (Procession of Pride), shortly after the pogroms and at the eve of Assembly elections in the state, Modi was projected as a 'protector of Hindus', essentially non-violent and eager to show that Gujarati Hindus were equally tolerant and peaceful.

In the wake of the international war against terrorism, the Hindu Right has come to employ the term 'jihad', holy war, in order to define its national enemies. The attacks in Godhra and Akshadaram are related to each other by attributing 'jehadi forces' responsible for the violence.[25] During the election campaign, Narendra Modi played upon fears over Muslim terrorists, something affirmed by the slogans and images that were disseminated during this time. For example, posters and T-shirts of the burning Sabarmati Express were distributed by BJP supporters. Although a BJP video did not show visuals of the burning train for risk of being banned by the Election Commission's mode of conduct, the commentary appealed to the potential voter by claiming: 'You are travelling. You can be attacked'. Among the sound of guns firing and temple bells ringing, the commentary continues: 'You are praying. You are attacked'. Then Modi is shown at the sites of both Godhra and the Swaminarayan temple in Gandhinagar: 'Many killers. Only one saviour'.[26] Paralleling the election campaign, the VHP could be less cautious in its media production. Local television channels in Gujarat aired VHP propaganda, for instance, speeches by VHP leaders and footage of the burning train, memorial photographs of the post-mortem martyrs, while CD-ROMs were distributed with footage of the Godhra carnage.[27]

Jain Studios' political and issue-based videos had been made for specific and crucial moments within the development of the Hindu Right, such as election campaigns, the Ayodhya controversy or the Kashmir conflict. Video technology's capacity to heighten emotions through montage and voice-over commentary was instrumental in highlighting the Sangh Parivar's intention to polarize group identities by drawing upon alleged enmities between Hindus and Muslims, even at the risk of bringing about ethnically related violence. That these group identities were based on stereotypes such as the anti-national, aggressive Muslim psyche and the tolerant Hindu sentiment, and furthermore embedded in narratives of sacred violence and historical legitimacy, has been discussed in the previous chapter on the staging of martyrdom in Jain Studios' videos. It seems to be precisely this spirit of martyrdom and sacrifice for the nation that lingers on until today, substituting those underdog *kar sevaks* who died in the police encounter in Ayodhya in 1990 with new images and narratives of suffering.

Addendum: The virtual reality of the 'Soldiers of Hindutva'

Above, the relevance of the Internet for the creation of transnational Indianness was mentioned, as well as the fact that the BJP was among the first Indian political parties to give itself a modern face by launching its official website in 1998. More than video technology, the world wide web enables the decentralization of the power of representation. And while Jain Studios relied on financial capital, as well as a well-oiled political and distribution network for the production and dissemination of Hindutva ideology, the Internet provides the opportunity for the production and distribution of such messages to a larger variety of social agents who might have less access to actual financial and political resources. Metaphors of humiliation, fear and pain associated with the Hindu nation personified as a mother and her dishonoured sons have recently reappeared on the Internet. In the context of these political developments, and the rise of the Internet as a means of 'alternative' communication mentioned in the beginning of this epilogue, it seems relevant to refer to a website in which the messages of Jain Studios' Ayodhya videos are somewhat consolidated and dramatized anew, couched in a more militant outspokenness than was ever expressed in Jain Studios' output. On the website www.hinduunity.org, Hindutva representatives who affiliate themselves to the Bajrang Dal employ the electronic media of the Internet for their 'war against Islam'.[28] In May 2002, the website carried the film footage of the decapitation of an anonymous man at the hands of an invisible person (referred to as 'Muslim murderer') in order to 'prove' the cruelty of Islam. The site appeals directly to the netizen Internet users: 'Take the oath to become a soldier of Hindutva today!' and 'If the love for my country Bharat is considered Hindu Militancy, then be it so!' Besides providing manifold links to Sangh Parivar websites and other institutions, as well as groups promoting Hinduness and anti-Islamic rhetoric, hinduunity offers 'The Black List. Enemies of Hindutva exposed!'[29]Posters can be downloaded from the website, referring to both the Kashmir crises and September 11, 2001, and portraying (Hindu) India as a country threatened by international and national terrorism. The accompanying texts of images taken, for example, from film posters read: 'How many more Hindus + Sikhs of Kashmir must die? How many more airplanes can we have hi-jacked by Islamic militants? How much more can our Hindu society be broken?' and 'Mission Kashmir. Are you ready to fight for Hindu dharma in Kashmir? Join the soldiers of Hindutva. . . and become part of the Hindu rashtra movement'.[30] These 'soldiers' differ from the Ayodhya *kar sevaks*-turned-martyrs in a Jain Studios video such as *PJH*: they are now much more clearly connected to, if not mimicking, the idea of an overtly militant *jihad,* or holy war, indicating an ongoing blurring between warlord and messianic saviour, freedom fighter or sacred warrior/terrorist. What is

interesting in this context is that this kind of virtual hate speech responds to a dissemination of a global stereotype of the 'threat of Islam' by appropriating images of alleged Muslim aggressiveness that circulate in and are fostered by international media and politics. Possibly, the hate speech marking a site like www.hinduunity.org could but evolve on the Internet. Yet this new media can also be compared to the alternative media space that had been created through video in the late 1980s in India, particularly because of the convenient means of decentralized and deregulated production and distribution. But the space in which this rhetoric evolves is even more anonymous in terms of its production, distribution and reception. These images and texts address a transnational virtual community. However, they reflect actual events, thus tying virtual to actual cartographies, practices and discourses of empowering visions. The search for the 'natural forms' within the 'second nature' of media technology that is inscribed in Walter Benjamin's quote in the introduction to this book has thus reached a level of power and representation in which it is increasingly difficult to distinguish 'the real' from 'the virtual'.

NOTES

Introduction

1 Benjamin, cited in Buck-Morss 1991: 123.
2 See Appadurai 1997.
3 Schiffauer 2000: 319, fn. 33; 322.
4 Schiffauer 1997: 67; also 148–9; translation by Christiane Brosius.
5 Schiffauer 2000: 321.
6 Hall 1997; see Chapter 2.
7 Benjamin 1999; 1973.
8 Schiffauer 2000: 321.
9 See Jay 1993 where he explores the fields of vision and visuality in various traditions of French thought.
10 Appadurai 1997: 31.
11 Buck-Morss 1991: 123.
12 Appadurai 1997: 33–43.
13 'Think-space' is a term coined by cultural historian Aby Warburg. He defines a dialectic process transgressing between distancing reason and emphatic emotion/ imagination in the act of self-positioning by creating associations with other objects or agents, and hence, imaginary communities within the field of cultural production (see Gombrich 1986; see also Gell 1998). See Hannerz 1992, 1980.
14 Particularly in chapters 4–6.
15 See Schiffauer 2000: 322.
16 Bhabha 1994; 1990.
17 Greenblatt 1991: 61.
18 See Ang 1996; 1985; Wilson 1993.
19 Appadurai 1987.
20 One the question of the particular context of postcolonial countries and their experiences of the 'dark sides' of modernity and nationalism, see, for instance, Chatterjee 1995a, Khilnani 1997 and Nandy 1994.
21 Robertson 1994.
22 The majority of political Jain Studios' videos are in Hindi. There are some exceptions of videos made for clients who emphasized their regional relevance (e.g. Rajiv Gandhi in Tamil Nadu, 1989), and a few videos made in the English medium (e.g. *The Making of a Chief Minister*, 1989).
23 With a few exceptions, most of the interviews for this fieldwork were conducted in English. Once more, I want to thank all the informants for giving me their valuable time and insight into different subject matters.

Chapter -1 Jain Studios on the Meandering Stairway to Success

1 On electoral politics and media usage in India, see Rudolph 1993, 1992, Sarwate 1990.

2 Jain is also president of JAIN TV (abbreviation of Joint American Indian Network), a branch of Jain Studios financed by non-residential Indians living in the USA (Chakraborty 1995).

3 The translation of Sangh Parivar is idiomatic. 'Sangh' is a term inscribed with the notion of a brotherhood, or a religious order, and association while 'Parivar' is the Hindi term for family. The website of the mother organisation, the RSS (www.rss.org/variousbranches.html), lists more than 20 organisations as part of the Sangh Parivar, for example, the *Vishwa Hindu Parishad* (World Council of Hindus, hereafter referred to as VHP, founded in 1966), promoting Hindu religious heritage and practice through educational and developmental programmes in a closely-knit network of religious orders, schools, etc., located in backward rural and urban areas in India. The VHP has strong networks outside India too, mainly in North America, Western Europe and South Africa. *Vidya Bharati* (Knowledge of India) runs about 6500 schools in India, with a strong base in tribal areas and slums; the *Akhil Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh* (All India Association of Workers) is a labour organisation with c. 3400 unions and c. 4,5 million supporters; *Samskar Bharati* promotes Hindu culture by means of concerts and exhibitions. About 40-50,000 small and large service-oriented projects have been established throughout India. Many of the organisations are active abroad where they align themselves to the international equivalent of the RSS, the *Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh* (HSS) in countries hosting Hindu migrant communities mainly consisting of middle class and high-caste traders and businessmen. On various organisations within the Sangh Parivar in relation to the BJP, see, for instance, Ahuja 1994; Basu et al. 1993; Bhatt 2001; Gold 1991; Graham 1993; Hansen 2001; Jaffrelot 1996; Nandy et al. 1995, Sarkar 1993.

4 See BJP 1993, Gopal 1993.

5 Basu et al. 1993; Gopal 1991; Nandy et al. 1995; Pandey 1993; Sarkar 1993, Sarkar and Butalia 1996.

6 Shah, in Engineer and Nayak 1991: 195; also Brass 1998; Gold 1991; Graham 1993; Hansen 2001; Jaffrelot 1996; Rajagopal 2001.

7 Appadurai 1997: 33. Appadurai writes on 'mediascapes': '(T)hey provide… large and complex repertoires of images, narratives, and ethnoscapes to viewers…, in which the world of commodities and the world of news and politics are profoundly mixed' (ibid. 35).

8 Clifford 1997. Clifford applies this term in his discussion of ethnographic exhibitions in order to explore the amalgamation of different levels of meaning and power in a particular field. See Pratt 1992.

9 On the impact of media on the public sphere in contemporary India, see French and Richards 1996: 23 pp.

10 In their study on South Indian social networks, Mines and Gourishankar (1990) have argued that a 'big man' is a person attributed status and reputation on the basis of individual deeds and power, in a specific social context. His role unfolds in the context of 'galactic politics', that is the alliance of various networks, and is grounded in alliances of loyalty, dependency and personal interest.

11 See endnote 3, this chapter.

12 The term *shakha* derives from the Brahmanical school of thought and practice, as well as the idea of the *akhara* (Hindu gymnasium with emphasis on physical training, see Michaels 2004: 273–276), a fusion of Kshatriya and Brahmin ideals and practices (Andersen and Damle 1987: 34–5; Jaffrelot 1996: 35–40). RSS-*shakha* activities are divided according to four age-groups. They are based on physical and spiritual exercises, the latter of which establishes strong teacher-pupil hierarchies (*guru-shishya*). On the organisational activities in a *shakha*, see Andersen and Damle 1987: 84-98; on the RSS affiliate for women (Rashtriya Sevika Samiti), see Butalia and Sarkar 1995. See also Basu et al 1993; Gold 1991; Jaffrelot 1996.

13 Protocol notes, March 1997.

14 Kepel 1994.

15 See Brosius, in Davis, forthcoming. On Sangh Parivar activities, see www.rss.org, www.vhp.org, www.hinduunity.org.

16 In 1992, the RSS counted about three million workers, organised in approximately 30,000 *shakhas* - compared to 25,000 *shakhas* in 1989 (Gold 1991: 560). In 1948, about 700,000 people attended RSS *shakhas* (Andersen and Damle 1987: 50). Gold refers to 100,000 volunteers in 1940 and 200,000 *swayamsevaks* in 1948 (Gold 1991: 559). The RSS homepage refers to 49, 210 Shakhas in 2004.

17 The Jana Sangh (founded in 1951) was a party deeply intertwined with, and actually emerging from, RSS cadres and doctrines (Brass 1990: 77; Jaffrelot 1996). One point on the agenda of the Jana Sangh was to moderate the *Hindu Mahasabha* (founded in 1915), a Hindu nationalist party following the extremist doctrine of Veer Savarkar, the author of *Hindutva - Who is a Hindu?* (1923), who also was its leader for a while (Graham 1993; Jaffrelot 1996: 131, Jaffrelot 1998: 114–92; McKean 1996a). Members of these organisations were chief ideologues Shyamprasad Mookerjee, Deendayal Upadhyaya, the author of *Integral Humanism* (who died before the BJP's foundation), L K Advani, and Atal Behari Vajpayee, the Prime Minister of India, between 1998–2004, who began his career from this political platform, and was the founding president of the BJP (see also Hansen 2001). The BJP was founded in 1980.

18 Savarkar 1989.

19 The first ban was issued in direct response to Mohandas K Gandhi's assassination at the hands of Nathuram Godse, a former RSS worker, on January 30, 1948. Then RSS leader M S Golwalkar came to the mutual agreement with Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru that the RSS would no longer attempt to penetrate national politics. After that, the organisation has been banned again in 1975, during Indira Gandhi's Emergency, and in 1992, following the demolition of the Babri mosque in Ayodhya at the hands of Hindutva activists on December 6th. On the RSS' interaction with political parties, see Gold 1991: 571 pp. The Sangh Parivar rejects to be called 'communalist' (that is consciously banking on ethnic group identities for reasons of political power) and even reverses the case claiming that 'Hindutva parties alone have fought against it (communalism) ... The RSS alone has followed Gandhiji's teachings in respect to austerity, selfless dedication to the service of mankind, of sacrifice and negation of material comforts for the sake of noble causes' (Desai 1998: 8, 12).

20 In 1984, the RSS supported the Congress(I). Datta 1993: 61; Ghimive 1992; Hansen 2001: 158; Rajagopal 2001: 309, fn. 80.

21 Yet, the RSS's role until 1947 is ambiguous in that the British Raj did not consider the organisation as an adversary. For important foundations of Hindutva's ideological skeleton, see Golwalkar 1996; Savarkar 1989; Upadhyaya 1992. There are countless pamphlets and booklets on various aspects of Hindutva ideology, history, politics, that circulate in bookstalls of the Sangh Parivar, most of them written by leading *swayamsevaks*.

22 According to the 1981 census, Hindus constituted 82.6 per cent of the Indian population, Muslims come second forming 11.4 per cent, Christians 2.4 per cent, Sikhs 2.0 per cent and Buddhists and Jains 1.2 per cent (Weiner 1997: 244). In the early 1990s, Hindus constituted about 650 million people, Indian Muslims subsumed about 110 million people (Nandy et al 1995: 15).

23 Many RSS leaders' careers display their familiarity with natural sciences and Western thought. K B Hedgewar, founder of the RSS, was a doctor of natural sciences. His successor, M S Golwalkar, held a master of sciences in biology, and the previous leader, Rajendra Singh, looks back upon a career as professor of atomic physics. This observation indicates that ideological orthodoxy and conservatism are not a result of backwardness but derive from experiences with modernity. For comparative studies on so-called religious fundamentalist organisations, see Juergensmeyer 1996; Kepel 1994; Schiffauer 2000, 1997.

24 Personal interview, December 1996.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

27 Jagdish Pal, Samskar Bharati, personal interview, February 1997. Samskar Bharati ('Indian Culture'), founded in 1982, is another organisation promoting Hindutva ideology by being particularly committed to the preservation and promotion of Hindu culture at the level of fine arts, literature, dance and music.

28 Bourdieu 1993.

29 Ibid

30 Although J K Jain belongs to the community of Jains, that is a religion close to Buddhism, Jainism is often seen as part of 'Hindu life and ritual', and many social rules and religious practices overlap with Hindu thought and practices. See Dundas 1992: 127.

31 The *Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad* is an organisation that strongly works towards the politicisation of universities, mainly in terms of mobilising students for Hindutva ideology. Many high-ranking politicians and ideologues within the BJP began their political careers in the ABVP, such as K Govindacharya and Pramod Mahajan.

32 Varma differentiates four segments of middle classes: the 'established' ones, the 'consuming class', 'climbers', and 'aspirants' (Varma 1998: 171). Their occupations range from rich landowner to urbanised professionals like teachers, advocates, academics, industrialists, civil servants or petty traders. The middle classes make up c.25 per cent plus of the Indian population, that is about 250 million people. They have an income share of c.50 per cent gross domestic product (McKean 1996a: 8) and a per capita income of Rs. 7000–40,000 (US$ 160–1,000). For further details on income categories, see Varma 1998: 171–8. Many RSS workers come from lower middle classes, but high-caste backgrounds. The middle classes can be distinguished according to the 'traditional middle class' (basically emerging in the mid-nineteenth century) and the 'new middle classes' whose rise is related to the economic liberalisation in the 1980s.

33 The Deendayal Research Institute was set up in 1972 with head office in Delhi. It is an autonomous organization dedicated to pedagogical and developmental work in tribal and backward areas of Uttar Pradesh in honour of Deendayal Upadhyaya.

34 Hannerz 1980.

35 Hannerz 1992; see also Schiffauer 1997: 93.

36 Ohm 2001. See also Butcles 2003.

37 Anderson 1991. See Rajagopal 2001.

38 See Armes 1988.

39 Ganley and Ganley (1987) noted that 'figures for VCR penetration into India ... vary widely'. In 1983, Reuters counted 300,000 VCRs, in 1984, *Variety* reported 180,000 (ibid.: 22). Boyd et al refer to 500,000 VCRs against four million television sets in 1984 (1989: 108).

40 Rajiv Gandhi, for example, is said to have supplied 5000 copies of a video to candidates for election campaigning, each made at US$ 125 (Boyd et al. 1989: 110).

41 The world price of VCRs in 1984 was c.US$ 400 (Boyd et al. 1989: 39). Victoria Farmer quoted from an article in *The Times of India* (20.3.1990) that alludes ownership of VCRs in 1990 to 36 per cent of metropolitan families with a monthly income of Rs. 2500 plus (US$ 57) (Farmer 1996: 112).

42 Personal interview, January 1997. Vijay refers to videos made on several RSS-parades, training camps, and possibly a video made on RSS leader K B Hedgewar's centenary celebrations in 1989 (*Shri Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, Janmastabdi 1989.* Produced by Indu Video Films Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, Hindi, c.50min.

43 Ali 1991.

44 Goswami 1998.

45 Khilnani 1997.

46 Kishwar 1998: 261.

47 This is despite the fact that between 1956 and 1964, 80,000 corruption cases were referred to the Home Ministry for further investigation (Varma 1998: 82).

48 Rajagopal 2001: 32.

49 Roy writes: 'Citizenship discourse in postcolonial India produced an "ethically incomplete" or "infantile" citizen-subject in "need" of statist intervention. Every account of citizenship was accompanied by a statement of its present "lack", and of the way in which the state alone could enable the dream of true citizenship to be realized in the future' (Roy 2002: 236).

50 Narwekar 1992: 25, cited in Roy 2002. Roy lists the following categories of Films Division productions: Art and Experimental Films; Biography and Personality Films; Classroom Films and Children's Films; Educational and Motivational Films; Defence Ministry Films; Export and Tourist Promotion Films; and The Visit Films (ibid.).

51 Ohm 1999: 80. See also Ninan 1998; Ohm 2001; Page and Crawley 2001: 62–66; Sinha 1998; Vilanilam 1996: 62.

52 Boyd et al. 1989: 10.

53 Mankekar 1999; Mitra 1993; Pendakur and Kapur 1997.

54 On the communalisation of politics under Indira Gandhi, see, for example, Jaffrelot 1996: 332 pp.

55 Khilnani 1997: 183. Under Rajiv Gandhi, the Congress Party(I) continued its vernacularization of politics, a strategy that was later adapted by the BJP (Rajagopal 2001: 44; 50. See also Brass 1990: 68 pp.; Engineer and Nayak 1993: 14 pp.; Jürgenmeyer 1981: 125–32.

56 See Ohm 1999: 82–85. 90,000 colour television sets were imported, prices for television sets dropped 50 per cent, and video players/recorders were made tax-free (Boyd et al 1989: 103). With respect to media penetration, numbers do not reflect the actual viewership of that time. See endnotes 41, 57 and 68, this chapter.

57 Pendakur and Kapur recorded that between '1983–1988, the number of television sets had increased from 2.8 million to 27 million, and the audiences increased from 30.3 million to 216 million, which was approximately 25% of the population (Audience Research Unit, 1985)' (1997: 210). In 1996, according to the VOW research unit, India had about 46 million television sets, of which 30 million were owned in urban areas (personal interview, Ankur Jain, VOW, November 1996).

58 Personal interview, December 1996.

59 Personal interview, November 1997.

60 Armes 1988: 196.

61 Ginsburg 1995: 257.

62 Ganley and Ganley 1987: 9. On other guerrilla movements and media usage: ibid.: 81, 94–5, 98–9, 101; Boyd et al. 1989: 20.

63 Hoover 1988; Hoover and Lundby 1997.

64 Rajagopal 2001: 49.

65 Lutgendorf 1990; Malinar 1995; Mankekar 1999, and Rajagopal 2001.

66 Rajiv Gandhi had came to be known as 'Mr. Clean', for he claimed to be corruption-free himself. By doing so, he promised to fight the corruption that had increasingly entered politics and public life. However, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi gained a reputation for enriching themselves and their close players, while at the same time neglecting the state of the country. In the 1970s and 1980s, corruption cases in the administrations continued to be made public. On the increasing dissatisfaction of the citizenry with Congress(I), see Malik and Singh 1995: 88. On Rajiv Gandhi, media and charisma, see Hansen 2001:138.

67 Rajagopal 2001: 160-1; Hansen 2001: 150.

68 On the monopolization of Doordarshan by Indira and Rajiv Gandhi, see also *India Today* (15.11.1989), cited in Chaube 1992: 73. From 1983–5, one low-power transmitter was inaugurated every week. Eighteen production centres (*kendra*) were set up in state capitals (Vilanilam 1996: 63). In the 1990s, Doordarshan's (DD) rural coverage was 78 per cent. However, about 700 million people in India do not own television sets, but may be able to access television through community sets. In 1996, one third of rural households still had no connection to electricity. DD's rural penetration according to the Indian Readership Survey (1995) was 28.8 per cent compared to 2.7 per cent for cable and satellite. Amongst urban audiences about 100 million people, that is 15–20 million households, receive cable and satellite television. See Brosius and Butcher 1999: 308–10; Ohm 1999; Rawla 1996: 8.

69 Boyd et al report: 'During the 1984 elections in India, videocassettes were used in almost all campaigns. Among them were one of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's supportive speeches and one entitled *Ma* (Mother), which was about the late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Both were supplied to candidates for election campaigning

purposes; the latter, circulated through 5,000 prints made at US$125 each, was seen all over India' (cited from Agrawal 1986: 37; in Boyd et al. 1989: 110).

70 Varma 1998: 89, see also Khilnani 1997. In 1993, 12 per cent of the Indian population represented those households with incomes between US$ 400 and US$ 1,867 p.a. (National Council for Applied Economic Research, cited from Mankekar 1999: 75, 368 fn. 43; see also ibid.: 74–80).

71 The Dalits belong to one of the most underprivileged groups in Indian society, the so-called 'untouchables', 'outcastes', or, as Gandhi named them, *Harijan* (children of God). Due to social empowerment and political mobilisation, especially in North and West India, in the course of this century, they began to act as a new power brokers in politics. On Dalit politics in the 1980s, see Hansen 2001: 141pp. See Chapter 5, this study.

72 In summer 1984, the Congress(I) government in Delhi produced video-cassettes to promote its Punjab politics. Cassettes were distributed to Congress(I) leaders and Indian embassies (Ganley and Ganley 1987: 113, 142). In May 1985, *The New York Times* reported that Sikh separatists distributed speeches of their leader Jarmail Singh Bhindrawale on audio-cassettes (ibid.: 9; fn 29).

73 BJP 1993: 1–2.

74 Personal interview, March 1997.

75 Brosius 1999: 124 pp.

76 Personal interview, March 1997.

77 However, the reasons for turning towards the BJP require individual contextualization. Govindacharya, for instance, was selected by the RSS to dedicate his competencies as think-tank to the BJP leadership and, at the same time, make sure that RSS interests were well represented.

78 Cited from an interview in Rajagopal 2001: 42.

79 Having joined the RSS at the age of fourteen (personal interview, February 1997), and engaged in work as assistant-editor of the weekly *Organiser*, Advani took up a political career, where he became Minister of Information and Broadcasting in 1977 (the Jana Sangh was then member of the Janata Coalition). See also Malik and Singh 1995.

80 Rajagopal 2001: 175.

81 Personal interview, February 1997.

82 Personal interview, November 1996.

83 Personal interview, February 1997.

84 Jain Studios' American partners hold shares of the production house (Chakraborty 1995; Karp 1994). Initiatives to challenge this centrist policy besides Jain Studios was the weekly *India Today*'s news service which distributed news on video cassettes to subscribers until the early 1990s.

85 Woods 2000.

86 Ohm 2001.

87 Madhavan 1990.

88 Furthermore, the combination of new media and the mobilization for an ideology and its political implications present in *VOW* finds a parallel of sorts in the mobile propaganda screenings by British colonialists in India during World War II (Woods 2000), the Indian Films Division after 1947, as well as the transformed railway

wagons (filled with libraries and cinemas) that were sent through the Soviet Union at the time of the cultural revolution under Lenin, promoting Bolshevik ideology, agitation and propaganda. Populist leaders addressed the crowds with films, speeches, revolutionary poems were read, theatre plays staged (Portisch 1991). Mobile vans with big screens were also employed for elections in the Italy of the 1950s.

89 The equipment consisted of a Sony Videoscope, audio and video decks, the screen, a video camera, and two portable generators (Rajan, n.d.). For Rajiv Gandhi's election campaign in 1989, 25 vans were hired at US$7,640 apiece per month (*Time* 1989). By 1996, VOW had a pan-Indian network of 125 Mitsubishi video vans.

90 Personal interview, December 1996.

91 The first opposition party using film as election tool was the Swatantra party (founded in 1959), a party supposedly promoting equal rights for all religions but emphasizing Hindu culture and *dharma*, or demanding a ban on cow slaughter (Brass 1990: 76, Lutgendorf 1995b: 274–5). In 1967, the party screened five minute films in local cinema halls before every show, very much like the government's Films Division (Atal 1971: 175). For a brief portrait on Jain Studios' first political videos, see Gupta 1989, about a Devi Lal 1989 election video, see Baweja 1989: 48.

92 Brosius 1999; Dickey 1993a and b; Elder and Schmitthenner 1985; Pandian 1992; Rösel 1995, Soeffner 1993.

93 Brosius 1999.

94 Rakesh Sharma, VOW, personal interview, December 1996.

95 'House Calls by Video', 27.11.1989.

96 Personal interview, Ankur Jain, VOW, November 1996. Depending on the client and shows per day, rates for hiring a VOW van for a 26-day cycle could range from Rs. 10,000 to 200,000 (US$230–4650) (Rawla 1996: 8).

97 Boyd et al. 1989: 35.

98 Ibid.: 10.

99 Personal interview, March 1997.

100 The Bajrang Dal was constituted, and until recently, headed by senior VHP activist and member of parliament (BJP) Vinay Katiyar in 1986 (Hansen 2001, Jaffrelot 1996). Its central aim was to help stir up emotions and conflict in the Ayodhya controversy, especially against the nation-state and Muslim groups. Emphasis in the organisation is on temporary militant agitation, thus the young mens' training evolves around hate speech against Muslims and Christians and the handling of weapons (ranging from trichul to lathis to guns). Meanwhile, the scope of involvement for the propagation of Hindutva expands the Ayodhya agitation and concerns attacks on various levels of the public and private sphere.

101 Sangh Parivar organizations sell propaganda items on the compounds of their headquarters and local offices. The largest pan-Indian publisher and distributor of the Sangh is Suruchi Prakashan. Jain Studios videos on the Ramjanmabhoomi issue were on sale in RSS and VHP propaganda shops in 1998, at the cost of c. Rs. 100 per item. In 1986 15,000 video parlours and 50,000 video libraries were counted, mostly in (semi-)urban areas (Boyd et al. 1989: 108).

102 Personal interview, December 1996.

103 Manuel 1996: 131–3.

104 On media and globalization in India, see French and Richards 1996; Gupta 1998; Rajagopal 2001.

105 Boyd et al. 1989: 102.

106 Goswami 1998: 611; Pendakur and Kapur 1998: 204, 207, Rajagopal 2001.

107 French and Richards 1996: 51.

108 Goswami 1998: 621; 626.

109 Page and Crawley 2001: 266–73.

110 Personal interview, February 1997.

111 Personal interview, April 1998.

112 Personal interview, January 1997.

113 See Vanaik 2001.

114 Goswami 1998: 622–3; 628–30.

115 Rajagopal 2001: 18.

116 Personal interview, November 1997.

117 Jain TV was one of the first private satellite television channels that was owned by Indians, catering to diverse range of regional middle class audiences. It broadcast a wide range of entertainment (soap operas, stories for children, but also adult movies imported from Hong Kong), religious programmes, business news (mainly for the stock market), and election coverage. Jain TV's branches in Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras developed regional programmes. By 1994, their main audiences were the urban middle classes (between 10 and 30 million households; see *Midday*, 20.6.1996: 23; Karp 1994).

118 *The Pioneer*, 25.12.1995.

119 *The Statesman*, 11.2.1996.

120 Since the early 1990s, cable operators have come to cater to individual neighbourhoods, predominantly in urban areas. They provide the subscribers with programmes from private satellite channels and video channels and even respond to the personal demands of their clients (Mishra 1999). However, unlike many video parlours and even libraries, the cable operators are professionally organised and thus also more easily subject to state control (Ohm 2001).

121 See Chakraborty 1995; Page and Crawley 2001; Ohm 1999; Sinha 1998: 24.

122 Personal interview, November 1996.

123 Bourdieu 1993.

124 Election Commission 1996: 82–117; 377–437. See particularly: 'Restrictions on the printing of pamphlets, posters, etc.', Consolidated Instructions, No. 3/9/(ES008)/94-J.S.II, Item No. 73, dated 2.9.1994. Election Commission 1996: 377–84.

125 Personal interview, November 1996.

126 In 2003, these ministries are represented by Hindu Right hardliners: L K Advani, Sushma Swaraj and Murli Manohar Joshi respectively.

127 The HSS is the RSS' representative body outside India. However, in non-Indian countries it is predominantly the VHP that strongly propagates Hindutva ideas. See www.rss.org; www.vhp.org; www.hinduunity.org; www.hinduunity.org/bajrangdal.html, www.freeindia.org.

128 Krishnakumar 2001; Kumar 2001.

129 Kumar 2001.

130 Krishnakumar 2001.

131 The scandal involved BJP chairman Bangaru Laxman, who had been secretly filmed by two Tehelka journalists as he received a significant bribe of rupee notes.

[132] Gupta 2001.

[133] Gupta 2001; see Chapter 4.

[134] Such a perspective, however, is challenged when we take into account another claim raised in an article in *The Week*. Here, the power struggle is placed in the context of the PMO's alleged perception of another JAIN TV programme as provocative, because in it, Jain suggested that 'New Delhi was not serious about the Kashmir peace talks' (Kumar 2001). Reference is made to an interview 'on JAIN TV with [the late] Hurriyat Conference leader Abdul Gani Lone ... Lone narrated how he was seeking help from the government to go to Pakistan for his son's marriage but was facing difficulties' (ibid.).

[135] Ibid.; Kumar 2001.

[136] See Gupta 2001, Venkatesan 2001.

[137] Sahay 2004.

[138] Jagdish Pal, Samskar Bharati, personal interview, February 1997.

Chapter - 2 Translating Metaphors of Nation-Building

[1] Title of the English version of the video, 1989. See videography.

[2] Castells 1997: 7.

[3] Hall 1997.

[4] Hall 1997: 18.

[5] Khilnani 1997: 195; see also 59–60.

[6] For comparative purposes, some studies prove to be useful in terms of media reception, however, discussions on the relationship of politics, ideology and video technology are mostly peripheral and do not enable a systematic evaluation. Newspaper clippings provide little differentiated insight on viewers' perspectives, for example on Jain Studios videos and if they do, reports are often anecdotal and either exaggerate the videos' effect or sideline Jain Studios' role as means of mobilisation within Hindutva rhetoric (see, for example, Assayag 1998, Jaffrelot 1996). On ideology and audience receptions of particular television programmes in India, see, for example, Mankekar 1999; Rajagopal 2001; on movie spectators in Tamil Nadu, see Dickey 1993a and b. See also Ang 1996, 1985; Wilson 1993.

[7] See Chapters 3 and 4. See also Ohm 1999, particularly her pointed analysis of the 'communication gap' between Congress governments and civil society in the case of Doordarshan. Roy's argument about the relationship of nation-state and citizenry shows similar parallels to the state's 'crisis of representation' (Roy 2002).

[8] Schiffauer 2000: 190; 1997.

[9] The party's parliamentary representation increased from two parliamentary seats in the *Lok Sabha* (Lower House) in 1984, to 120 seats in 1991. Already in the first two years after the BJP was founded, it increased its membership numbers from 1.2 million to 3.5 million (Puri 1992: 136). On the BJP organization, see, for example, Malik and Singh 1995: 141–55; Jaffrelot 1996.

[10] Bhargava 1999: 25; Engineer and Nayak 1993; Khilnani 1997.

[11] Personal interview, December 1996.

[12] Münkler 1994: 128; Schiffauer 1997: 80–89.

[13] Jois 1996: 10, Jois' book is for sale in paraphernalia shops of the Sangh Parivar. A similar quote can be found in a diary of an RSS *swayamsevak*: 'We are all children of

this land. So we are one family without any discrimination between us' (cited in Andersen and Damle 1987: 96).

14 The mythical figure of the Vastupurusha is linked to the concept of the cosmic man's sacrifice, his body's division into parts of a diagram, and the act of this dismemberment as the creation of universe (Hiltebeitel 1988, Volume 2: 311 pp.).

15 Dharma cannot be literally translated. Its metaphorical meaning comes close to 'holding together' man and world, state and society, hence promising the proper sustenance of society on the basis of principles, values and duties of 'right conduct' (Malik and Singh 1995: 17–19; Nene 1991: 37). In his study on tolerance in Hindu ritual, Richard has pointed out that *dharma* is an absolute, as well as a relative concept (Burghart 1996: 283), maintaining that it implies that interpretations and alterations can be practised by those who claim its monopoly. On Upadhyaya's definition of dharma with respect to the creation of nationality, see Upadyhaya 1992: 48–60. In the Hindutva doctrine, the *shastras*, ancient Sanskrit doctrines, should still lay out the code of conduct for intra- and intercommunal agency. For Hindutva eulogies on dharma, see Frawley 1993; Talreja 1992. To the extent that dharma is seen as sacred or god-given law and foundation of the state, it could be compared to the Islamic religious law of the Sharia (Schiffauer 2000).

16 Personal interview, November 1997.

17 Upadhyaya 1992: 37; see also Malik and Singh 1995: 16–19 and Nene 1991.

18 Upadhyaya's discussion of nationality, the state and civil society shows influences of Aristotle and Plato, Darwin and Marx.

19 Upadhyaya 1992: 41–43.

20 Ibid.: 49, also 60.

21 Malkani 1980: 168.

22 J K Jain in Alex 1994.

23 This is a view also articulated by other scholars of history and social studies in India, and elsewhere, who emphasise that–on the basis of the colonial experience and the alleged continuation of Western hegemony through globalization–Western models are not universally compatible and should be critically reflected in terms of their 'side effects'. See particularly Partha Chatterjee's 'Secularism and Toleration', in Chatterjee 1998: 228–62; Chatterjee 1995a and 1995b; Juergensmeyer 1996; TN Madan's essay 'Secularism in its Place' (1987), in Madan 1995: 395–412; Ashis Nandy's 'The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance', in Das 1992: 69–93. See also Bhargava 1999.

24 The BJP claims that 85 per cent of the Indian population are Hindus. This, for example, counts in the Dalit and various *adivasi* (tribals). On the BJP's Dalit politics, see Shah 1993: 203pp.

25 'J.K. Jain and the Pride of being Indian', *Blitz* (Bombay). 22.1.1994.

26 See Misra 1996.

27 Chatterjee 1995b: 21.

28 Misra 1996.

29 See Misra 1996: 123

30 Merkel and Puhle 1999: 166–74; also Schiffauer 1997: 35–7. See Hann and Dunn for their edited volume on civil society's alternative models (Hann and Dunn 1996: 20). On different developments of civil society in Europe with respect to the citizen-subject, see Ahmad 1996: 312–19.

31 Personal interview, December 1996.

32 See, for instance, Srinivasan, in Das 1992: 305–20.

33 Personal interview, December 1996.

34 Chatterjee 1995b: 23. Article 30 of the Indian Constitution grants minorities the right to set up their own educational institutions in order to protect their cultural traditions and practices from discrimination, and ensures that a group can claim representation and participation in the process of nation-building and shaping the public life of the national society. Personal laws (Muslim Personal Law, Muslim Women Bill, etc.) provide the Muslim minority with their own legislation, and reservation politics are to make sure that a certain percentage of members of previously unprivileged groups have a right to access government jobs and higher education. On reservation politics, see also Hansen 2001: 142, 150, 164.

35 Chatterjee 1995b: 22; Engineer and Nayak 1993: 10; Khilnani 1997: 59.

36 Malik and Singh 1995: 109–12.

37 Statement by Dr. J K Jain commenting on the *Communal Situation in the Country* at an assembly of the Upper House (*Rajya Sabha*) on January 3 1991 (Rajya Sabha 1990–91: 433). See also Chapter 4.

38 Münkler 1994: 39.

39 Savarkar employs the from '*jati*'; 1989: 84.

40 Ibid.: 39.

41 Ibid.: 46.

42 McKean 1996a: 81–85; Shah 1998: 253. On 'fraternity', see Savarkar 1989: 129–36. On Savarkar's thoughts and work, see also McKean 1996a: 71–96.

43 Malkani 1980: 165. Malkani continues: 'Caste, in fact, was born out of the profound spirit of tolerance that has always pervaded in India. . . . The weak become stronger through fraternal union within the group' (ibid: 167).

44 Malkani 1980: 165.

45 Malkani 1980: 165; Savarkar 1989: 84–103. This mobilizing strategy collides with the fact that the RSS, as well as the BJP and the VHP, recruite a high percentage of high-caste (Brahmin) supporters from lower middle class backgrounds. By analysing the role of caste in BJP politics of the regional state Gujarat, Shah has found that in 1991, 63 per cent of state and district leaders in the BJP belonged to the upper castes. Lower castes and middle classes were often looked down upon (Shah 1998: 255–7, see also 253–54).

46 Personal interview, December 1996.

47 Personal interview, December 1996.

48 Personal interview, February 1997.

49 Brosius, forthcoming.

50 Lutgendorf 1995b: 276; also Brosius, forthcoming.

51 Prasad 1998: 87.

52 Münkler 1994: 36.

53 BJP 1993.

54 Upadhyaya 1992: 60. *Ram rajya*, derived from the epic Ramayana, and the life of Lord Ram, refers to a version of political rule that projects kingship and court as ideal forms of state and people. It idealizes the king's rule as sacred ethical doctrine and source of order. Ram is attributed the title of 'Defender of the Social Order'

(*Maryada-Purushottama*) (Mathur 1992: 68) or 'ideal world conqueror' (Savarkar, in McKean 1996a: 80). *Goonda rajya* (rule of villains) is the opposition of enlightened kingship; here, anarchy, chaos and terror are said to keep the upper hand. Representatives of the secular state, especially heads of regional political movements and state governments, are often referred to as leaders of *goonda rajya*. On divine kingship in India, see Inden 1994 and Dirks 1987: esp. 106 pp.

55 Upadhyaya 1992: 60; see also Inden 1994: 192.

56 Münkler 1994: 47.

57 Chatterjee 1995a: 235–38.

58 Khilnani 1997, especially 37–41.

59 Ibid.: 41.

60 Personal interview, February 1997.

61 Narendra Modi was one of the key strategists involved in the organisation of the Ram Rath Yatra (1990) and the Ekta Yatra (1991–92). In 2001, he became Chief Minister of Gujarat. Modi is a hardliner and L K Advani's protegé. In spring 2002, he was accused of complicity in the pogroms against Muslims. The violence that led to the murder of about 2000 people had evolved from the context of the VHP leadership's announcement to begin the reconstruction of the Ram temple at Ayodhya on March 15, 2002.

62 Lokmanya Tilak, a political leader who belonged to a wing of the National Congress that promoted militant strategies against the British colonialists. He instrumentalised the annual Ganpati festival in Maharashtra in order to camouflage political activities as religious practice, assuming that the British Raj did not perceive the religious domain as potentially threatening to its colonial power. (See Kaur 2003).

63 Personal interview, June 1997.

64 Personal interview, December 1996.

65 *Vishwa Janni Gau* (Universal Cow Mother, Hindi, 1992), for example, was commissioned by the VHP and produced by Jain Studios. The video carries an appeal not to vote for those 'who kill the cow' and refuse to promote cow protection. See Freitag 1989a.

66 For example, *Hamlavar Khabadar Hindustan Hai Taiyar* ('Attackers beware, Hindusthan is prepared', Hindi, c. 1990). See Chapter 4.

67 Manuel 1993; Rajagopal 2001: 225–33.

68 On genre, Rajagopal 2001: 89, on the Ramayan as 'dharmic form' (ibid.: 92). Election videos usually do not exceed thirty minutes or running time while an issue-based video produced for one of the BJP-supported mass campaigns, be it for the Ramjanmabhoomi controversy or the Kashmir problematic, could be up to 90 minutes long. See videography.

69 Personal interview, November 1996.

70 Personal interview, December 1996.

71 Talreja 1982: 193. The perception that Muslims wanting to be recognised as Indian nationals have to assimilate to the superior Hindu/ Indian way of life, is read between the lines of the following quote by K R Malkani. Countering statements by anti-Hindutva agents about Hindutva's alleged communalist attitude, Malkani remarks that the Sangh Parivar 'has nothing against Muslim Indians–as distinguished from Muslim invaders. But it has no doubt that we were and are a Hindu nation; that change of faith cannot mean change of nationality.' This statement is cited from the history section of the BJP's official website (www.bjp.org). Malkani refers to the

Hindutva argument that Indian Muslims are actually converted Hindus, who either changed their religion because of forced conversion under Islamic rule, or who tried to escape the rigidity of the Hindu caste system.

72 Chatterjee 1995b: 33.

73 Ibid.: 35.

74 'The real problem', *Hindustan Times*. 6.1.1991, published in Kumar et al. n.d.: 13.

75 Personal interview, October 1998.

76 This is where the longing for a temporal dictatorship (*kemal pasha*) falls on fertile grounds (on the search for a 'strong hand', see Brass 1998: 283).

77 Personal interview, October 1998.

78 Brosius, forthcoming.

79 Personal interview, November 1997.

80 Personal interview, March 1997.

81 Personal interview, June 1997.

82 Personal interview, February 1997.

83 The BJP's *Ekta Yatra* (1991) and *Suraj Rath Yatra* (1996) have failed as crowd-pulling tools of political mobilization.

Chapter - 3 Hindutva's Media Phantasmagorias

1 Translation from the video's Hindi title *Bhaye Prakat Kripala*.

2 BJP 1993: 1.

3 BJP 1990: 12–13.

4 Foucault 1980: 131, see also Hall 1997: 48.

5 See Uberoi, Pinney, Ramaswamy and Roy, all in Ramaswamy 2002.

6 Hannerz 1996: 76.

7 The term 'interocularity' is adapted from Appadurai and Breckenridge's notion of the 'interocular field', that is, the site of fusion of ocular experiences and practices in public (1992; also Breckenridge 1995: 15). Pinney contributes an important expansion of the term emphasising the sensual and performative aspects of seeing as an ongoing and conscious dynamic process (Pinney 2002, 1999: 214).

8 'Intervisuality' is a term derived from Mirzoeff's discussion on the intertwined dynamics of visual production (Mirzoeff 2000: 7). It can be related to the notion of the 'interocular field' in Appadurai and Breckenridge's discussion of the role of the visual in India's popular culture. In this dynamic space, the idea of 'image journeys' comes to play a vital role, particularly in discussing the production of meaning, an idea that finds its predecessor in cultural historian Aby Warburg's (1899–1929) notion of the 'image journey' in the early 20th century (Gombrich 1986). Appadurai has proposed that objects have a 'social life', or 'careers' (Appadurai 1992). They move between and cross over 'landscapes' such as mediascapes, financescapes, etc. (Appadurai 1997: 35 pp.).

9 Benjamin 1933, in Caygill 1998: 110–17; see also Taussig 1993.

10 Phantasmagoria is actually a neologism from the nineteenth century. The term was given to an exhibition of optical illusions in London in 1802 (Oxford English Dictionary 1989). Walter Benjamin employs it to refer to a sense of illusion enhanced by commodity fetishism as part of a utopia of progress. See Benjamin 1999: 10 (*Exposé of 1935: V*); Tiedemann 1999: 938. A spectacle such as the Great Exhibition

of London in 1851, displaying industrial development, technology and the notion of civilization as amythical powers, carrying within them the capacity to bring prosperity and social equality to everyone–without proper revolution (see Buck-Morss 2000: 114).

11 Das 1995a: 184.

12 Appadurai and Breckenridge 1995: 9.

13 Jaffrelot 1996: 373, 385–7.

14 BJP 1993: 13.

15 Some of the footage from *GMH* can be found in the Jain Studio videos *From Sagar to Saryu* (*Sagar se Saryu tak*, 1990), *We can give up our lives but we can't break our vow* (*Pran jaye par Vachan na jaye*, 1990), or *The Truth shall not be touched* (*Saach ko anch na Pyareh*, 1992).

16 J K Jain, personal interview, December 1996.

17 In this dynamic concept, the idea of 'image journeys' comes to play a vital role in the production of meaning. The idea can be traced back to German cultural historian Aby Warburg in the early twentieth century (Brosius 1997; Gombrich 1986; Hofman et al. 1980; Warburg 1993).

18 Personal interview, April 1997.

19 Power p. 99: Personal interview, November 1996.

20 Smith 1995, Inglis 1995; Jain 1995, 1997; Pinney 1992, 1997.

21 Jain 2002, 1997.

22 'Omnipraxy' is a term used by Daniel Smith (1995: 36) in his discussion of popular prints. It refers to the multiple presence of sites available for worship due to popular art/availability in the public sphere.

23 Pinney 1997; see also Babblwadley 1995.

24 In Caygill 1998: 115.

25 Benjamin 1973: 217.

26 Emerging from a 'fabulous aura' (Mikics, cited in Zamora and Faris 1995: 10), magical realism's agenda is not with escapist strategies but with non-modular realism, rejecting a uniform, Cartesian realist approach to the depiction of history, time and place in literature and art. Magical realism borders the field of the imaginary with the ordinary, it uses descriptions of hallucinatory scenes in order to invoke and suggest tactics of resistance against 'colonial perspectivalism' (Pinney 2002). Despite its German origin–Franz Roh used the term magical realism in 1925 to define what he saw as a new direction in painting after Expressionism–magical realism is today widely known as a term defining a specific genre of postcolonial literature (for example, Salman Rushdie or Gabriel Garcia Marquez; see Zamora and Faris 1995: 15).

27 On Amar Chitra Katha, see Hawley 1995 and Pritchett 1995. On the diverse debate regarding the potential effects of the *Ramayan* serial, see Dalmia-Lüderlite 1991; Lutgendorf 1995a, 1990; Malinar 1995, Pollock 1993, Thapar 1990. On the commodification of religious practice and narratives through Hindutva ideology and state television, particularly the *Ramayan*, see Mankekar 1999: 165–223; Rajagopal 1994: 1664.

28 Writing on Hindi film and ideology, Prasad (1998: 75p) has employed the term 'darshanic gaze'. On 'darshan' (editing), see also Mankekar 1999: 191–4, 199–204; Rajagopal 2001: 110–13.

[29] Ohm 1999: 75.

[30] On 'kitsch', see Pinney 2002.

[31] Ohm 1999: 77.

[32] See Pinney 1999. Mitchell states that vision is a product of experience and acculturation: 'what we are matching against pictorial representations is not any sort of naked reality but a world already clothed in our system of representation' (Mitchell 1986: 38).

[33] See Chapter 2 in this book. On *satsang*, see Little 1995: 273.

[34] www.hinduunity.org/bajrangdal.html

[35] Singh 1993, n.p.

[36] www. hinduunity.org/bajrangdal.html

[37] The use of weapons ranged from knifes to guns, reported the *Times of India* on 13.7.2001 (Banerjee 2001). According to the official Bajrang Dal website (October 2001), the organization counts 500,000 activists.

[38] On Rajiv Gandhi's 'Ram politics', see endnote 81, this chapter. See Sarlas 2001, Chapter 9.

[39] See Nichols 1991: 34.

[40] I owe this reference to John Little's article on video *vacana*. On the Sanskrit term of *pravacan*, Little remarks that it is made up of 'recitation, oral instruction, teaching, expounding, exposition, interpretation of sacred writings . . . for instruction and spiritual guidance' (Little 1996: 269).

[41] Manuel 1996, 1993; Rajagopal 2001: 225–30.

[42] Eck 1985; Gell 1998.

[43] Hawkins 1999: 150.

[44] Foucault 1977; Evans and Hall 1999: 61–71

[45] Evans and Hall 1999: 61. The concept of panopticism is derived from Bentham's architectural model of a tower in which each and every prisoner can be surveyed and exposed to 'permanent visibility' (Foucault in Evans and Hall 1999: 65) without being able to return the surveying gaze. Instead, s/he internalizes the gaze of control. For Foucault, visibility and surveillance are elements of power.

[46] Taussig 1993: 219.

[47] Personal interview, February 1997.

[48] Benjamin 1973: 227.

[49] Armes 1988: 186–90.

[50] Ibid.: 192.

[51] Ibid.: 193.

[52] Taussig 1993: 21.

[53] Pinney and Ramaswamy, both in Ramaswamy 2002a.

[54] Taussig 1987: 441.

[55] Personal interview, February 1998.

[56] Benjamin first used the term in his discussion of Surrealism (c. 1933; Benjamin 1991: 297; see also Taussig 1993: 23).

[57] Taussig 1993: 21.

[58] On embodiment and vision, see Pinney 2002.

[59] Taussig 1992: 111.

60 Personal interview, October 1998.

61 Because of the dispute around the mosque its gates had been closed and no worship of Ram had been allowed inside the mosque since 1934. Hindus continued to perform *pooja* in front of the locked site. The reference 'wrong' is made with respect to the attempt of illegally entering the mosque.

62 Jain 2002.

63 Pietz 1996: 197.

64 Gell 1998: 102.

65 Mulvey writes that '(c)ommodity fetishism also bears witness to the persistent allure that images and things have for the human imagination and the pleasure to be gained from belief in phantasmagorias and imaginary systems of representation' (Mulvey 1996: 5).

66 Benjamin 1999: 4.

67 Ibid.: 4–5.

68 Benjamin 1973: 226.

69 Personal interview, February 1997.

70 Hawkins 1999: 157.

71 Alfred Hitchcock, cited in Armes 1988: 124.

72 See Lutgendorf on Ram's 'imprisonment in a padlocked cage' on a VHP pamphlet in 1985 (Lutgendorf 1995b: 276).

73 Sarkar 1995: 192.

74 BJP 1996: 6.

75 Caygill 1998: 112 pp.

76 See Benjamin's Epilogue on Fascism's aesthetics of the 'Führerkult' (cult of the leader) and Futurism's glorification of war in 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' (Benjamin 1973: 234–5; see also Caygill 1998.

77 I am grateful to Philip Lutgendorf for this information, he drew my attention to the fact that pamphlets enforcing the narrative of 76 battles for the site's liberation, or the *Ramlalla* miracle scene, are most probably of local origin, and possibly derive from oral traditions of various sadhu lineages in Ayodhya. He particularly refers to a pamphlet attributed to Ramgopal Pandey ('Sharad'), entitled *The Blood-Stained History of Rama's Birthplace* and traces its origin back to the 1970s (personal communication, May 2000). See also Gopal 1993; Jaffrelot 1996: 91–6; Lutgendorf 1997: 43; van der Veer 1987.

78 Lutgendorf 1997: 42.

79 Paget 1998: 129; see also Nichols 1991. One is reminded here of the genre of history painting it 19th century.

80 Noorani 1993b: 70–1, 83.

81 Ibid.: 78–9. However, even Rajiv Gandhi banked on the 'Hindu wave' when he permitted the opening of the gates as well as the *Ram Shila Pooja* to take place – expecting the act would gain him electoral advantage. It certainly served as a major advance in the development of the Ayodhya controversy (Jaffrelot 1996: 398-9; see also Rajagopal 2001: 189).

82 Lutgendorf 2002.

83 Thanks to Anne Hardgrove for her reference to the potential parallel to other genres of Asian films.

84 Kapur 1993a.

85 Ibid.: 104–6. Tanika Sarkar ascribes the longing for protection to the capacity of using the icon of *Ramlala* to appeal to female supporters of the movement, while she links the warrior-like figure of angry Ram to the rise of male chauvinism (Sarkar 1993: 27–41; see also Kapur 1993a). Rajagopal cites Hindutva activist Uma Bharati from a personal interview in which she explains 'that picture of Ram, with Hanuman bowing to him, or Krishna playing the flute. That's why we are so weak and ineffective. You have to show them fighting. Krishna with a *chakra*, Ram with his bow drawn' (Rajagopal 1994: 1663).

86 Kapur 1993a: 89.

87 Ibid.: 89–96.

88 Pinney 2002.

89 On Orientalism as an imperialist technique and power discourse, see Said 1991. Although Breckenridge and van der Veer employ the term 'internal Orientalism' (1993: 11), my emphasis on 'internalized' is to enhance the notion of social agency inherent in internalized Orientalism in terms of mimesis and alterity. King refers to 'affirmative Orientalism' (King 1999: 86), a term used by Richard G Fox in relation to the anti-colonial struggle, while Lindestrom uses the term 'auto-orientalism' to mark the 'way people talk about themselves' (in Carrier 1995: 38).

90 Uberoi 2002.

91 This is particularly in response to Kapur's claim that muscular Ram's realism 'seeks to represent things as they really are and not as we imagine and desire them to be' (Kapur 1993a: 97). The notion of a 'realist depiction' follows a standardized Western notion of authenticity as empirical realism. For a discussion of non-modular realism, see, for example, Hawkins 1999; Jain 2002, 1997, 1995; Pinney 1999, 1997, 1992.

92 Greenblatt 1991: 22.

93 Benjamin 1973: 248.

94 Benjamin outlines the cultic value as 'apparatus which is pressed into the production of ritual' as opposed to democratization by means of the 'exhibition value of the work' (Benjamin 1973: 218).

95 Here, I draw upon Homi Bhabha's description of the colonial stereotypical discourse as a 'concept of 'fixity' in the ideological construction of otherness', 'a paradoxical mode of representation' and a 'process of subjectification' (Bhabha 1994: 66–7).

96 See Uberoi 2002.

97 See Pritchett 1995.

98 Bhabha 1994: 74

99 Greenblatt 1991: 61.

100 Ibid.: 14.

101 Personal interview, October 1998.

102 Savarkar 1989, for example: 42–4.

103 Taussig 1987: 441.

104 Ibid.

105 Burkhart 1996: 286.

106 Ibid.: 291.

107 Härle 1993: 33.

Chapter - 4 Remapping the Nation-Space: place and displacement

1 Eck 1999: 183.

2 H V Seshadri, senior RSS leader, in Bhartwal 1997: 4.

3 The Ram *Rath Yatra* was the first BJP-led *yatra*. Its historical predecessor was the *Ekatmata Yagna* (Sacrifice for Unity), conducted by the VHP in 1983. In 1993, the BJP undertook the *Janadesh Yatra* (also documented by Jain Studios)¸ followed in 1996 by the *Suraj Rath Yatra* during which it projected itself as the party of good rule. In 1997, the BJP carried out the *Swarna Jayanti Rath Yatra*, commemorating 50 years of India's Independence. For the latter, the news service ANI produced a video. On BJP *yatras*, see Assayag 1998, Davis 1996, Deshpande 1998, Jaffrelot 1996, Roy 1996: 35–37.

4 Jaffrelot 1996: 414–415; Malik and Singh 1995: 86pp.

5 Paralleling the Ram *Rath Yatra*, riots were reported in 26 places en route, and 99 people were said to have been killed between 1 September and 20 November 1990 (Shah 1998: 248). See also Deshpande 1998: 269–277; Nandy et al. 1995; van der Veer 1994: 123.

6 L K Advani, in *BJP Today*, Vol. 6(12), 15–30.6.1997: 4–5. In another issue of the magazine Advani states: 'Yatra has a unique significance in Indian tradition and national life. It is not only a spiritual exertion in the form of a journey, undertaken with reverence and a measure of toil, but also an exercise in the experience and assertion of India's millenia-old cultural civilisational unity' (ibid.: Vol. 6(11), 1.-15.6.1997: 6).

7 See Roy 1996: 35.

8 Personal interview, February 1997.

9 The video was produced by Matthew S when he was working independently (after he quit his work as director of political videos with Jain Studios and before he rejoined them to work with their new television channel *JAIN Satellite Television* in 1994). Matthew S claims that about 10,000 copies were made of the master-tape and distributed on a nation-wide scale among BJP workers who showed them during election campaigns (personal conversation, February 1997).

10 Jaffrelot 1996: 450.

11 See Harley 1992.

12 See Chapter 3; Appadurai and Breckenridge 1995: 9.

13 'Geobody' is a term used by Thongchai Winichahul (1994) in his analysis of the relationship between nation, gender and territory. The 'geobody of the nation' seeks contextualization as a cultural-specific discourse of power. See Najmabadi 1997: 442–3; Ramaswamy 2001: 98, 1999: 42.

14 Morley and Robins 1995: 89, 91.

15 See Bhardwaj 1973; Coleman and Elsner 1995; Fuller 1992.

16 RSS ideologue Rama Jois notes: 'There has been a filial attachment between the territory of Bharat (India) and the people. Just as the attachment of an individual to his/her mother is the highest and she is the dearest, same is the attachment between the people in this Country and the territory of Bharat' (Jois 1996: 9). See also my discussion on the metaphors of fraternity and family in Chapter 2.

17 Das 1995b: 50.

18 Ibid.: 53.

19 In the eyes of Hindutva ideologue Veer Savarkar, for example, this return of Ram to Ayodhya marked the birth of the Hindu nation (Savarkar 1989: 11–12).

20 Walzer 1988: 17, translation the author's.

21 There are specific cosmological concepts and abstracted maps that identify sacred symbols like the cow with territory and dwelling-sites of Gods and Goddesses. Places on the cow's body are ordered according to the hierarchy of lordships, gods and goddesses that make up the cosmos (see figure 44).

22 Eck 1999: 167, 137.

23 In her article 'The imagined landscape', Diana Eck explains that pilgrimage and the concept of territory in India are indeed not marked by the selection of explicitly unique sites. They are rather set in a context of polycentricity, plurality and duplication (Eck 1999: 39). See also Fuller 1992: 207; van der Veer 1994: 124. A cosmological model and ritual diagram that identifies space with the human body and society, mirroring social and cosmic order and the preservation of the world, is the mandala of *Vastu Purusha* (Cosmic man, *Rig Veda* 10.90, see Eck 1996: 140; Fischer, Jansen and Pieper 1987: 67). In the context of the discussion of sacred space this model which identifies social order with 'god-given' reveals its relevance as a formula for architectural and ritual traditions. Another related model of spatial mythology is the *yantra*, a meditative diagram, cosmological map and mechanism to tame powers. On *Devibhagavata Purana* 7.30, see O'Flaherty 1975: 249.

24 Today, Sudarshan is leader of the RSS (*sar sanga chalak*). On the Ekatmata Yagna, see Jaffrelot 1996: 360–2; van der Veer 1994: 125–126; McKean 1996a: pp. 117–121; Deshpande 1998: 274; Davis 1996: 40. See also *India Today*, 30.6.1987, and 30.11.1983: 34–6; *Organiser* 23.10.1983: 15; 15.1.1984: 7; 13.11.1983: 1–13.

25 Personal interview, February 1997.

26 See endnote 23, this chapter, and Chapter 2.

27 Krishna's presence at the side of Arjun consecrated the killings and guaranteed victory as everything was said to be executed according to *dharma*. Dharma is a specific code of moral and political conduct. See Biardeau 1997: pp. 114–116.

28 The person on figure 48 is Adi Shankaracharya, a philosopher and ascetic who lived around 800 AD. He is often referred to as father of the pan-Indian pilgrimage, and thus the concept of the nation as a sacred territory.

29 On this aspect in Savarkar's work, see Hay 1991: 289–295; McKean 1996a: 71–96; Jaffrelot 1996: 22–31; Khilnani 1997: 160–1.

30 Savarkar 1989: 112.

31 Devibhagavata Purana 7.30.44–50, Mahabhagavata 11.32–118. See O'Flaherty 1975: 249–251. See also Fuller 1992: 44. I am grateful to David Smith and Sophie Hawkins (Dept. of Religious Studies, Lancaster University) for their advice on this matter.

32 In his article on Indian cartography, Kalpagam writes that, '(s)urveying and mapping were important aspects of the technologies of state formation in the early modern period in Europe . . . Whereas for pre-modern states, territory was important to delineate the kingdoms for military and taxation purposes, new 'political rationalities' emerged with the modern state . . . (and) it became important to define and demarcate the 'site' of political and administrative power' (Kalpagam 1995: PE87).

33 Edney 1997: 54.

34 On the roots of topographical art in Dutch and Italian landscape paintings of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Smith 1992: 112. Smith traces those

traditions in the context of European portrayal and imaginings of the South Pacific in art and poetry of artists accompanying colonial voyages. On the role of the Picturesque and national identity in islamic countries such as Iran, see Najmabadi 1997: 450.

35 Pinney 2002. Pinney defines colonial perspectivalism as a key visual technique employed by the British in India in order to increase their power of surveillance and classification.

36 Edney 1997: 54. See Ghose 2000; Chapter 2.

37 Ibid: 54–59, 62.

38 Archer 1980: 7; see also Tillotson 1990.

39 See endnote 89, Chapter 3.

40 On the map-as-logo, see Anderson 1991: 173–8.

41 Kalpagam 1995: PE87.

42 Edney 1997: 9.

43 Ibid.: 11–15.

44 See Khilnani 1997: 25.

45 Savarkar 1989: front-page; n.p.

46 Golwalkar 1996: 81–150 and Savarkar 1989: 111–118, 129–136. See also McKean 1996a: 71–96.

47 Pinney 1990: 259. On the rather unsuccessful project of 'taming' India through cartography, at least in the middle of the nineteenth century, see Sumathi Ramaswamy on 'cartographic anarchy' (Ramaswamy 1998b: 562).

48 See, for instance, Hasan 1994.

49 Golwalkar 1996: 93, 117. Second RSS-leader in command, M S Golwalkar commented on India's Partition: 'How humiliating is this to our manliness and how insulting to our intelligence!' (ibid.: 95).

50 Personal interview, February 1997.

51 Kritzman 1996: 8.

52 Bhabha 1994: 86.

53 Cited in King 1999: 203.

54 Young 1995: 170.

55 This is the title of a series of advertisement spots by Oglivy & Mather, broadcast on Doordarshan in 1986–7 to convey a message of national integration for the celebration of 40 years of Independence.

56 Khilnani 1997: 72.

57 On mapping practices under Nehru, see Deshpande 1998: 259, 263.

58 Assayag 1998: 175; Krishna 1996.

59 See also Roy 2002.

60 See Davis 1996: 43. The temple in Somnath was built around 1000 AD, destroyed by Mahmud Gazni (c. 1026), rebuilt and then, time and again, destroyed under Muslim rule until it was converted into a mosque in 1706 (van der Veer 1992: 90, 94). On the antagonistic figures of Patel and Nehru, see Khilnani 1997: 33–34.

61 For comments on the Somnath temple's reconstruction, see the *Organiser*, for example defining it as 'synonymous with national spirit' and 'more than a temple. It is the sovereign symbol of our living nationalism. It is a national institution, a national memory' (*Organiser*, 12.3.1951: 3).

62 Shields 1991: 46.

63 BJP 1993: 18.

64 On amnesia and nationality, see also Nora 1996: XIII. On the metaphor of regaining self-consciousness through awakening in modern European nation-states, see Anderson 1991: 195.

65 On Warburg's work on social memory, see Gombrich 1986: 239–306; Warburg 1993.

66 In Frances Yates' book on the art of remembering, we learn from Cicero: 'He (Simonides) inferred that persons desiring to train this faculty (of memory) must select places and form mental images of the things they wish to remember and store those images of the things they wish to remember and store those images in the places, so that the order of the places will preserve the order of the things, and the images of the things will denote the things themselves, and we shall employ the places and images respectively as a wax writing-tablet and the letters written on it.' (Cicero: *De Oratore*, II, LXXXVI: 351-4, cited in Yates 1966: 2).

67 Foucault 1991: 34, see also 1986, and Foucanet in Mirzoeff 1998: 229–236.

68 Ibid.: 40–46; see also Deshpande 1998.

69 Golwalkar 1996: p. 145. Equally strict was Savarkar with his territorial definition of Indianness and his notion of the Muslim as 'threatening Other' (see Deshpande 1998: 256, Savarkar 1989).

70 Ibid.

71 Ibid.: 145.

72 Bhishikar 1991: 89.

73 Mother India is often equipped with attributes of several main Hindu goddesses such as Kali, Lakshmi or Durga. Equally, her vehicle, the lion, symbolizing power and protection, in religious iconography is related to Durga and Parvati. See Kinsley 1986: 178–185; see also Ramaswamy 2002.

74 Noorani 1993a: 200, also 222.

75 Kashmir is presently ruled under Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, and granted special status since the border dispute with Pakistan has still not been solved and clashes between Indian army and Kashmiri civilians occur repeatedly on diverse issues such as the demand for a separate state, or terrorist infiltration from Pakistan. Although Kashmir has its own constitution it is still subordinate to the central government. On Article 370 of the Constitution, and the postcolonial history of Kashmir, see Noorani 1993a.

76 Das 2001: 99.

77 However, the *Unity yatra* did not have the appeal as the Ram *Rath yatra*.

78 Sarkar 2001: 163, 176.

79 Ibid.: 178.

80 Ramaswamy 1999: 18.

81 Personal interview, February 1997.

82 Excerpt from Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's poem *Bande Mataram* (in Hay 1991: 133–135). In the original text *Anandamath*, the ode is to a personification of Bengal, not to India as a whole. Furthermore, Ramaswamy has argued that there is no mentioning of a map. This interpretation derives from B K Roy's translation first published in 1942 (Ramaswamy 2002b). Sarkar (2001, here: Chapter 4) provides a fascinating discussion on Bankimchandra's early writings and agenda in relation to

Indian nationalism and Hindu-revivalism.

83 Personal interview, March 1997.

84 The title of the Hindi original is *Hamlavar Khabadar Hindusthan Hai Taiyar*. This election video was dedicated to the issue of abolishing the special status of Kashmir.

85 Najmabadi 1997: 466.

86 Ramaswamy 2002b, 2001.

87 Anusan Parvan, chapter 108, verses 16–18, Bhardwaj 1973: 84.

88 See Ramaswamy 2002b, 2001; Roy 2002; Uberoi 2002.

89 King 1996: 33.

90 Ibid.: 34.

91 See Blunt and Rose 1994; Hagenow 1994: 56–60; on the personification of the French nation, see Guiomar, in Nora 1996, Vol. II: 189, 205; on the German notion and celebration of 'Volkskörper', nation, family and body, see Barnes and Duncan 1992: 136.

92 Plessen 1997.

93 Schiffauer 1997: 80–88.

94 Kantorowicz 1990: 209pp; 1953.

95 Mirzoeff 1995: 58–62.

96 Film titles were *Mathrubhumi* (Reddy 1939), *Mother India* (International Pictures 1929, Mehboob 1957), *Vande Mataram* (Pendharkar 1926, Reddi 1939, Banerjee 1946) and others, all in various regional languages (see Kaul 1998: 98). The Films Division produced films like *My dearest Maa* (1965) about the letters written from a son to his mother while serving in the Indian National Army.

97 Kaul 1998: 127; see Sarkar 2001: 176–180.

98 Ramaswamy 2001: 102. For her comprehensive study on historical and iconographical aspects of Mother India, see Ramaswamy 2002b, 1999, 1998a.

99 See also Ahluwalia 1984.

100 Ramaswamy 1998a.

101 Mitter 1994: 154.

102 Morning prayers in RSS *shakhas* use a prayer to Mother India (see www.rss.org; versions in Bengali, English and Sanskrit). For the *Vande Mataram* song, see the official website of the BJP (www.bjp.org).

103 See Breckenridge and van der Veer 1993.

104 Krishna refers to this perception as 'unequalled elsewhere' and as an 'evident obsession with "alien" infiltration, and with shadowy "foreign" hands' (Krishna 1996: 196).

105 Personal interview, February 1997.

106 Hann and Dunn 1996.

107 Interestingly, Iranian poetry has created similar metaphors of devotional nationalism, indicating the universality of the idea of a gendered nationalism, desire and cartographic anxiety. Najmabadi quotes from an article in a patriotic newspaper of 1907: 'Iran! Our mother! You who has nourished us with the blood of our veins for many long years, and who have fed us with the tissue of your own body! Will we ever live to see your unworthy children entrust your skirt of chastity to the hands of foreigners? Will our eyes ever see foreigners tear away the veil of your chastity?'" (Najmabadi 1997: 460). Ramaswamy too, points out a similar rhetoric of violence with regard to gendered Tamil nationalist poetry when she quotes from Annadurai, the Dravidian

Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu who wrote about the 'disloyal son' of the state: 'Does not your blood boil when you see [him] uncoiling her [Mother Tamil] braid, rubbing off the vermilion on her forehead, peeling off her clothing' (cited in Ramaswamy 1999: 42).

108 Personal interview, April 1998.

109 Savarkar 1989: 113.

110 See Najmabadi 1997.

111 Ramaswamy 1998a.

112 Ibid.: 78. On the symbolism of milk as a nourishing essence of knowledge and nationalism in Islamic rhetoric, see Najmabadi 1997: 464.

113 Ibid.

114 Bhabha 1994: 371.

115 The fixed reality, writes Bhabha, 'resembles a form and narrative whereby the productivity and circulation of subjects and signs are bound in a reformed and recognisable totality. It employs a system of representation, a regime of truth, that is structurally similar to Realism.' (Bhabha 1994: 371)

116 For a discussion on the implications of this commercialized multimedia nationalism, apparently stripped off any political colour, see Roy 2002.

117 Personal interview, February 1998.

118 Roy 2002.

Chapter - 5 Remaking History: 'The Truth shall not be touched'

1 Walter Benjamin, *Theses on History,* 1940. Benjamin *Über den Begriff der Geschichte* (German original), cited from the translation in Buck-Morss 1991: p. 95. See also Benjamin 1992: 249.

2 Taken from the the VHP's official website in 1998. See link on '*Sundarkanda*' *in Ayodhya*, www.vhp.org.

3 On Benjamin's notion of history and messianic time as dialectic temporal models, see Tiedemann 1999: 941–945.

4 Eckert 2002: 40. See also Eckert 2003.

5 *GMH*, 1990.

6 Dening 1996: 37.

7 Maurya is a VHP activist, script writer and artist. The quote stems from a personal interview, conducted in October 1998.

8 Personal interview, October 1998.

9 Personal interview, April 1997.

10 Benjamin 1992: 249.

11 *Jetztsein*, Benjamin in Tiedemann 1999: 942.

12 Dening 1996: 47.

13 Tiedemann 1999.: 943, see also Frisby 1986.

14 This intertwined relationship of myth and history questions positivist and structuralist views that positioned the two at extreme ends of an axis. From this concept derived the assumptions that societies on the path to so-called civilization can only but distance themselves from mythology, and that only such societies could make and write history. Important in this respect is historian Jan Assmann's claim that 'myth is the most appropriate definition for an internalised form and function of history'

(Harth and Assmann 1992: 40) and 'the most important medium of society's imagination' [ibid.: 42]. In his work on the role of myth in the context of kingship in India, Nicholas Dirks argues that myth and history are both ways of understanding the past and that their separate analytic treatment is problematic. Myth, to Dirks, is an 'integral historiographic possibility, a distinctive way of establishing sequence and relevance in the understanding and representation of the past' (Dirks 1987: 58).

15 Bhattacharya 1993: 122.

16 Burghart 1987: 2.

17 Basham 1981: 83, 321.

18 Bhattacharya 1993: 134. Another such connection to the specialness of India as the site of universally recognised knowledge is given in the History of India (*Bharatbarsher itihas*): 'In ancient times, when virtually the whole world was shrouded in the darkness of ignorance, the pure light of learning shone brightly in India' (cited in Chatterjee 1995a: 97).

19 Lutgendorf 1997: 42.

20 Ibid.: 43.

21 Ibid.: 42.

22 On Warburg, see Gombrich 1986, especially chapters 13–15.

23 Bhabha 1994: 141, 142.

24 Swami Vivekananda, 1897. Quote from *Our Sacred Motherland* (1897), reprinted in in Prasad 1996: 130.

25 BJP 1993: 20. See also Chande 1992: 65.

26 Personal interview February 1997.

27 Flusser 1990: 121–122.

28 European historiography broadly categorizes Indian history according to four major phases: ancient and medieval India; Mughal empires; colonial rule, and modern India (see Spear 1989; Chatterjee 1995a: 76–115). This is yet another example of Hindutva ideology's underlying internalized Orientalism.

29 Chatterjee 1995a: 98.

30 Ibid.: 102.

31 Ibid.: 99.

32 The nativist concept that Indians must have 'their' history is also examined in Khilnani 1997: 158–9; 164; 168–9.

33 Personal interview, February 1997.

34 Chatterjee 1995a: 100.

35 Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, cited in Said 1991: XIII.

36 Cited in Chatterjee 1995a: p. 76. See also Dirks 1987: pp. 55–58.

37 Chakrabarty 1995: p. 384; see also Pandey 1993: p. 9 and Chatterjee 1995a.

38 Nandy 1988: 26.

39 The Two-Nation Theory was based on the claim by individual politicians that India's Independence could but result in the creation of an independent Muslim state (see Kulke and Rothermund 1998: 285–6; Hay 1991: 218, 228–230).

40 Seshadri Chari, editor of the *Organiser,* personal interview March 1998.

41 The scene had been visualized before 1989. Lutgendorf refers to a VHP pamphlet of 1985 in which Ram is said to be 'imprisoned in a padlocked cage' (Lutgendorf 1995b: 276).

[42] According to the voiceover narration in *God Manifests Himself*, another 'miracle' took place too: Babur's general Mir Baqi was commissioned to build the mosque. In a letter to Babur he reports about 'the strange fact that whenever we try to construct the walls of the Masjid at the spot, the walls keep falling down by the evening'. Subsequently, holy men were consulted who advised Mir Baqi to name the mosque *Sitabagh* (Sita's Garden), to build no minarets, and to allow *sadhus* to perform their prayers there. On the notion of mythical history and evidence, see Bhattacharya 1993: 132–7.

[43] Mr Gupta, teacher at a VHP-run school in New Delhi, personal interview, February 1997.

[44] Personal interview, April 1998.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Personal interview, February 1998.

[47] Personal interview, November 1996. In another conversation, Ramesh K referred to a voiceover passage in *The Truth Shall Not Be Touched*. He said that, 'just as Muslims believe that their Prophet was born in Mecca, so Ram must have been born here! As much as Christians believe that their Prophet Jesus was born in Bethlehem, so *he* was born here. Just as the Hindus of the world believe that Ram was born in Ayodhya, at this spot in Ayodhya, so it is so, that is the truth. This belief and conviction cannot be changed by any force in the world. If Christians believe that Jesus was born by a virgin, then Hindus must not challenge this belief. Then they support this belief out of respect to Christians. If all Muslims believe that a single hair in the Hazratbal mosque in Srinagar is the beard of the Prophet, then Hindus never dispute this.' (Personal interview, December 1996)

[48] Personal interview, February 1997.

[49] Personal interview, April 1998. See VHP 1991; Chande 1992; BJP 1993.

[50] Personal interview, April 1998.

[51] See Kang 1998, see also Chapter 3.

[52] Chande 1992: 69.

[53] Peter van der Veer points out the biased refusal of district magistrate K K Nayar to remove the idol from the mosque on the basis of arguing that the removal would enhance further tensions between Hindus and Muslims. In this context, van der Veer highlights Nayar's affiliations with the RSS and notes that Nayar was asked to resign on the basis of his role in fuelling communally-based tensions (van der Veer 1987: 290).

[54] In India, representatives of local grass-root organizations collected individual donations of Rs. 1,25 from villagers and sent the donations, along with the bricks, to Ayodhya (Shah 1998: 247). This way, 167,063 *shilas* (sacred bricks) and millions of rupees were collected (Jaffrelot 1996: 400). Before they were sent off, the bricks were consecrated mainly by VHP priests in *poojas* and displayed on locally organised rallies. In Ayodhya they were then collected on VHP grounds close to the mosque. The video *God Manifests Himself* shows them, piling up like a mountain, supposed to manifest the religious devotion and national dedication of leaders and followers alike.

[55] BJP 1993: 15.

[56] Sanskritization is a term defining the upward mobility of socially and ritually lower groups in the hierarchy of the caste system. As pointed out in Chapter 2, this vertical

movement is an affirmation of the caste system, not a social reform (see Srinivas 1992). For a discussion on the role of caste in regional BJP politics of the 1990s, see Hansen; Jenkins, and Shah, all three in Hansen and Jaffrelot 1998.

57 Bhabha 1994: 151, 145.

58 See Greenblatt 1991: 58; Dening 1996.

59 Personal interview, March 1997.

60 The individual chapters in *The Truth Shall Not Be Touched* are called: 1. 'Laws' (Puranas, mythic origins); 2. 'Historical truth' (reference to written 'eye-witness reports, for example, by Guru Nanak, Tulsidas, etc.); 3. 'Proof of there not being a *masjid*' (mosque's architecture and use); 4. 'Archaeological evidence' (footage of findings from archaeological excavations, interview with archaeologist); 5. 'Evidence from Revenue Records' (Gazettes from British Raj). The video was passed by the Censor Board of Certificate.

61 By the time *The Truth Shall Not Be Touched* was made, the BJP had incorporated its demand for the construction of the Ram temple into its election manifesto.

62 The anti-temple groups had their 'experts', too. They were mainly presented through the *All India Babri Masjid Action Committee* (AIBMAC), which assembled different Muslim groups and, representing the idea of the secular state, secularist historians.

63 Chande 1992: 59.

64 Personal interview, April 1998.

65 Mandal 1993: XIII.

66 Joseph 1998: 4.

67 Personal interview, November 1996.

68 Cited in Bhattacharya 1993: 126–7. Also cited in Nandy et al. 1995: 54.

69 Diwali (celebrated in autumn) and Holi (a spring festival) are popular Hindu festivals and national holidays.

70 Personal interview, February 1997.

71 Ibid.

72 See Brosius, forthcoming.

73 Personal interview, February 1997.

74 Protocol notes, October 1997.

75 Personal interview, April 1998.

76 For more supranatural events that served Hindutva propaganda purposes, see Nandy et al 1995: 36.

77 As usual, numbers of participants are estimated and thus vary. The BJP's *White Paper on Ayodhya* states that 125,000 *kar sevaks* had assembled on 3 December 1992 (facing 25,000 policemen and paramililary forces) (BJP 1993: 46): Other sources claim participation of 800,000 *kar sevaks* (Chande 1992: 70). Nandy et al (1995) refer to 200,000 'workers' assembling in Ayodhya on 6 December 1992 (186). Amongst the participants were also adivasi and Dalit (Shah 1998: 248).

78 Brass 1998: 14.

79 See Setalvad 2001.

80 Protocol notes, October 1998.

81 Personal interview, February 1997.

82 Chande gives a protocol of the proceedings of the demolition. According to his report, the leaders of the movement appeared at 11.30. The first dome of the

mosque fell at 14.45, the second one at 16.30 and the third dome collapsed at 16.45. Only at 16.50 did the leaders appeal to the people to maintain peace . . . (Chande 1992: 70). The role of spokespeople is controversial: Other sources state that the leaders appeared at 11.00 (among them L K Advani and A B Vajpayee (BJP); K C Sudarshan and H V Seshadri (RSS); Ashok Singhal and Vinay Katidar (VHP)), left the scene at 11.45 – the demolition started shortly afterwards, at noon (Nandy et al 1995: 192). See also Jaffrelot 1996: 455.

83 Jaffrelot 1996: 458–464.

84 Personal interview, March 1997.

85 Nandy et al. 1995: 8; 16–17; Shah 1998: 248–249.

86 Nandy et al 1995: vi.

87 Homi Bhabha (1994), Sunil Khilnani (1997) and Arjun Appadurai (1997, 1996).

88 According to Brass, a 'fire-tender' may even manage to 'masquerade as promoter of communal peace and harmony' (Brass 1997: 17).

89 Brass 1997: 46–47.

90 Ibid.: 16.

91 Personal interview, March 1997.

92 March 1997.

93 Rajya Sabha 1990–1991, here: 3.1.1991, emphasis mine. The following quotes by Jain have been taken from the same source. Page-numbers are kept in the text body.

94 Personal interview, February 1997.

95 Dening 1996: 38.

96 Personal interview, February 1997.

97 Personal interview, February 1997.

98 Personal interview, October 1998.

99 Personal interview, October 1998.

100 Personal interview, February 1997.

101 Nandy et al 1995: 37.

102 Personal interview, October 1998.

103 The nuclear missile tests incorporated two symbolically loaded narratives: the heavily contested region of Kashmir and the fragile relationship with Pakistan, as well as the scientific aspects involved in the launching of missiles. The figure of the soldiers fighting along India's borders as well as the scientist, are important in national rhetoric since India's independence, but increasingly so towards the late 1990s. Another figure of pride is the computer programmer, representing the worldwide recognition of India's software capital.

104 Personal interview, February 1997.

105 Personal interview, February 1997.

106 Personal interview, October 1998.

Chapter - 6 Mother India's Heroic Sons: a passion play of martyrdom

1 Dubashi 1995: 5. Jay Dubashi is an RSS activist and frequently writes for the *Organiser*.

2 Translation from a devotional song in *The Truth Shall Not Be Touched* (1992).

3 See Davis 1996: 29. Davis mentions 200,000 *kar sevaks* (ibid.), Jaffrelot refers to

c.150,000 people who were put in detention before 30 October (Jaffrelot 1996: 419–20).

4 Jaffrelot 1996: 418.

5 Ibid.: 421.

6 Paramilitary forces were made up of Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), Border Security Force and Cultural Reserve Police Force (Dasgupta n.d.: 103; see also Rajagopal 2001: 197).

7 Again, estimated numbers of actual deaths vary. Sangh Parivar spokespeople claimed the loss of a few hundred *kar sevaks*, the government announced much less. Jaffrelot mentions 18 persons killed on 30 October 1990 (1996: 422); Rajagopal gives the number of five (2001: 197), while Datta refers to 20 claimed dead by the police while the VHP talked of thousands (1993: 62). On the martyrs of Ayodhya in 1990, see Datta 1993: 61–63; Jaffrelot 1996: 420–425; Rajagopal 2001: 182–3, 215.

8 Of the video *We Can Give Up Our Lives…* more than 100,000 copies were sold through BJP offices and branches, as well as in RSS and VHP shops (Jaffrelot 1996: 422) and many more must have been copied en route.

9 Personal interview, December 1996.

10 This heading is in reference to Anand Patwardhan's documentary film entitled *Father, Son and Holy War* (1994) where Patwardhan investigates the relation between male chauvinism and religio-political extremism.

11 This term is also used as the synonym for national salvation, for example by Veer Savarkar, author of *Hindutva. Who is a Hindu?* (1923), a crucial work evolving the notion of militant Hinduism. More discussion is required with respect to the comparison of Islamic terminology. There seems to be a parallel, if not an identification of *dharma yuddha* with the notion of *al-cihâd assagîr*, the little *jihad* where weapons can be employed, in addition to *al-chihâd al-kabir*, the great *jihad*, every individual's spiritual and intellectual effort to peacefully promote and follow the principles of the Qu'ran. Yet, *jihad* does not promote or sanctify killing and forced conversion *per se*. Violence is only justified when acted out in defence against tyranny, injustice and violence. It had been introduced to India through Sufism at a time when spiritual and military warriors spread their versions of Islam, paralleling the arrival and establishment of Mughal Empires in the 16th century. The Islamic concept of the *shaheed* (martyr) has been adapted into Hindu nationalist discourse, as well as Sikh devotional traditions and martial ethics (see Fenech 2000; Nijhawan 2002). Further scholarly attention in this context is needed with regard to the term *mujaheddin* (holy warrior) that could be used both on the transcendent level of fighting for purity and truth as well as against an actual enemy. For example, Carl Ernst has distinguished two kinds of Islamic martyrs: The warrior-saint in battle (*ghazi*) and the mystical martyr finding salvation from earthly live in death and torture (*hallaj*) (Ernst 1985: 313; 1993; see also Rizvi 1997).

12 Voiceover commentary, *God Manifests Himself*.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 In the popular readings of the *Ramayana,* Ravan is the ruler of Lanka, a demon. There are various interpretations and dramatizations of his role, but generally he is seen and understood as evil antagonist to Lord Ram (see Richman 1994; Thiel-Horstmann 1991.

16 Sarkar 1996: 181.

17 Ibid.: 173, 175.

18 Pinch 1996: 140.

19 Ibid.: 145. On warrior saints, see also van der Veer 1989; Michaels 1998: 301–3; Ernst 1985; Eickelman and Piscatori 1997: 63–68.

20 Pinch 1996: 147.

21 The most popular heroic kings in Hindutva rhetoric are Rana Pratap and Shivaji, both fighting Mughal armies in pre-colonial India. *GMH* has a scene featuring a warrior-queen referred to as 'Rajkumari', well-known for her association with 'war-goddess' Durga (voiceover commentary).

22 See Juergensmeyer 1994.

23 See Chapter 2; Biardeau 1997: 114–116.

24 *Arthava Veda* 12-1-62.

25 K C Sudarshan, senior RSS leader at the time of the interview (February 1997), Sudarshan was Joint General Secretary of the RSS. Today, he is supreme guide of the RSS (*sarsanghchalak*).

26 McKean 1996b.

27 In an audiocassette used for mass mobilization regarding the Ayodhya issue, renouncer Sadhvi Rithambhara appealed to women: 'You have to make yourself into motherhood: remember how Bhagat Singh's [a Socialist revolutionary who was hanged by the British in 1931] mother was found crying after his death, not because she had lost her son, but because she had no other son to be martyred' (Sarkar 1995: 193). Bhagat Singh was an atheist and socialist, and has been, and is still today, one of the key national martyrs in India. Bhagat Singh and his comrade Rajguru Dutt's prison statement of 1929 reveals their search for 'global' as well as 'local' models of resistance by basing their idea of Indian revolution on the writings of Guru Gobind Singh, Shivaji, Kamal Pasha and Riza Khan; on Garibaldi, Lafayette and Lenin; the French and the Russian Revolution and the Irish freedom movement (Khullar 1981: 120). For further references, see Grover 1987, Gupta 1977, Mohan 1985, Noorani 1996.

28 Personal interview, April 1997.

29 Talreja 1982: 234.

30 See Nandy 1988: 7.

31 Talreja 1982: 6–7.

32 Hage 1996. (In reference to Lacan).

33 Sarkar 1996: 182.

34 Najmabadi 1997: 445.

35 Ibid.: 451.

36 Ibid.: 459.

37 See Chatterjee 1995a.

38 See Ramaswamy 2002b, 2001.

39 Pinney has pointed out that British colonialists were particularly cautious of popular prints depicting Kali due to her associations with the anti-colonial struggle in Bengal (Pinney, in Bayly 1990: 341).

40 Ramaswamy 2002b. 152.

41 Guha-Thakurta has noted that journals like *Prabasi* attempted to challenge the 'calumny of cowardice and physical weakness that the British heaped on the Bengalis' (Guha-Thakurta 1992: 137).

42 The term 'geobody' derives from Winichahul's study on Siam (1994). See also Ramaswamy 2002b: 152.

43 Golwalkar 1996: 93.

44 Ghose 1997: 16. In another version, there referred to as the poem *Bhavani Mandir* (1905), the quote continues: 'Does he quietly sit down to his meal… or rush to her rescue?' (cited in Nandy 1988: 92).

45 Najmabadi 1997: 443.

46 All excerpts are from Bharati 1995: 9.

47 Ramaswamy 1999: 18.

48 Bharati 1950: 7. The wordings of the RSS prayer, put on the Internet (www.rss.org), use the same strategy of creating bonding and feelings of obligation: 'Grant us such might as no power on earth can ever challenge, such purity of character as would command the respect of the whole world…'

49 Ramaswamy 2002b.

50 *Atharva Veda* 12-1-62, cited in Talreja 1982: 238–239.

51 Talreja 1982: 234.

52 Golwalkar 1996: 92.

53 Ibid.: 95.

54 Ibid.: 448, emphasis mine.

55 Ernst 1985: 308.

56 Personal interview, October 1998.

57 Kazmi 1996.

58 Chakravarty 1993: 260–8.

59 Personal interview, April 1998.

60 Personal interview, November 1996.

61 Fenech notes that around 1900, Indologists reinterpreted the idea of martyrdom from 'elements such as the asceticism or renunciation (*tyaaga* or *samnyaasa*)' (2000: 5) On devotionalism and heroism in Hindu religious practice and thought, see Michaels 1998: 281–303.

62 '*Rütlischwur*', see Flacke 1988.

63 See Mohandas K Gandhi: *Satyagraha: Transforming Unjust Relationships Through the Power of the Soul*, reprinted in Hay 1991: 265–270.

64 This idea also shows parallels to the Islamic concept of *jihad* in which followers are conceived as seekers of the sincere path. See endnote 11, this chapter.

65 Personal conference notes from *Martyrdom religious/political: The Rhetoric of Fundamentalism in the Age of Globalization*, Europe-University Viadrina, Frankfurt/Oder, 5–7 November 1998.

66 Personal interview, April 1998.

67 Wood 1993: xv–xvii.

68 See Fenech 2000: 8 pp.

69 Ibid.: 6–7.

70 Ibid. 3–4.

71 Excerpt from a public speech (Hindi) presented by a VHP saint in Ayodhya as it is in *GMH*.

72 Narrated by Plato in the *Symposium* 213: 15, cited in Gell 1998: 341.

73 Camille, in *The Gothic Idol*, 1989: 230–1, cited in Gell 1998: 347. Thanks to Christopher Pinney for his reference to this aspect of Gell's work. My gratitude also goes to Paul Taylor, The Warburg Institute, University of London, for the reference on martyrs, such as Gertrude of Helfta and Ignatuis of Antioch. One of the earliest depictions known of Hanuman opening his chest seems to be a Kalighat painting, Calcutta, c. 1835 (Victoria & Albert Museum, London; thanks to Divia Patel for enabling me to view some of the material in the India Collection of the museum). According to Carl Ernst, expert on the history of Islamic martyrdom, there are no references to similar subjects visualized in Pahari paintings, and no such references in Islamic art, for example, in Sufi iconography (Ernst, quoted from personal email conversation of August 1998).

74 Gell 1998: 129.

75 Ibid.: 131.

76 Pinney 1997.

77 See endnote 27.

78 See Guha-Thakurta 1992; Mitter 1994.

79 Taussig 1993: 24.

80 Singh 1983, n.p.

81 Personal interview, October 1998.

82 The India Office Library and Records at the British Library in London holds several popular prints with this iconography on microfiche. Most of them were proscribed during the time of British India. 'Bhagat's curious present' shows Bhagat Singh presenting his bleeding head on a plate (by Sivasankar Tirani, Kanpur c. 1931, OR MIC 505), but there is also, referring back to the 'Sacred Heart' iconography discussed above, a print 'The love in the heart of Mr. B.K. Dutta', where Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Bismil(?) are revealed in Dutta's open chest (c. 1931, OR MIC 884; for more on related iconography of popular prints, see OR MIC 773; 901, and 1035).

83 Nationalist devotion banks on models of spiritual and religious sacrifice, as in the following verse from Guru Nanak's Adi Granth: 'If you want to play the game of love approach me with your head on the palm of your head. Place your feet on this path and give your head without regard to the opinion of others' (cited in Fenech 2000: 98, see also fn. 203 ibid.). In the first half of the twentieth century, there are posters such as *Heroes Sacrifice* (c. 1931–2, printed at Janki Printing House and published by Krishna Picture House, Lahore) on which the parents of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev donate their son's heads to Bharat Mata (in fact, they were not decapitated but hanged, and cremated at a riverside, near Huseiniwala); there are some in which Subhas Chandra Bose (legendary leader of the Indian National Army) clad in a uniform, kneels down amidst various other heads of freedom fighters, to present his (smiling) head on a plate to Bharat Mata (*Jai hind*, 'Victory to India', drawn into the skies). On Deep Singh, see Fenech 2000: 95; on Sikh martyrdom, see also Banerjee 1976, Singh 1975, Singh 1979, Uberoi 1996. An iconographic link from the head sacrifice to mythological battles and the cult of the goddess is given in Hiltebeitel's study of the cult of Draupadi: an illustration displays a fresco in a Draupadi temple in Chennai (Madras) on which Arjun's son Aravan offers his head to Kali (Hiltebeitel 1988, Volume 1: 249, 328), an iconography very like the 1930s poster depicting *shahids* such as Bhagat Singh presenting their heads to Mother India. However, as Hiltebeitel points out, the Sanskrit *Mahabharata* knows nothing

of the sacrifice in the battle of Kurukshetra that plays an important role in Tamil versions of the epic (ibid.: chapter 15): 'the story in its Tamil forms is clearly related to a traditional South Indian glorification and apparent practice of heroic self-mutilation – in some cases suggesting self-decapitation – before the goddess, usually for the sake of victory in battle' (ibid.: 318). Head sacrifice is also linked to idea of death and resurrection in Hindu ritual (ibid.: 366). How and when this narrative could have entered the Hindutva rhetoric, possibly through concepts of nationalism (see Ramaswamy 1999), requires more research. Furthermore, Kathleen Erndl mentions a form of head sacrifice in the context of Vaishno Devi, a popular mother goddess in Jammu, North India (also identified with Durga) who receives the head of her bodyguard Bhairo as a symbol of his utmost selfless devotion to her (Erndl 1990: 241–247).

84 In his doctoral thesis, Nijhawan suggests that in the colonial period, this discourse was further heightened by tying martyrdom and the struggle for the liberation of Sikh sacred sites to notions of territoriality (2002: 195).

85 Das 1995b: 155.

86 *The Times of India*, 20 November 1990, cited in Aggarwal and Chowdhry 1991: 58.

87 Ernst 1985: 308.

88 The Mandal Report recommended a reservation of 27 per cent of posts in central administration and public coporations be reserved for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) who constitute about 52 per cent of the Indian population. See Jaffrelot 1996: 414; 430; 443; Malik and Yadav 1995.

89 Rohit M, personal interview, April 1998.

90 White has noted that many cults of martyrdom can be established quickly, and do not require the authority of a religious institution, as is often the case in European Catholicism. Thus, some cults take only a decade to establish, as for example, in the case of the Easter Rising in Ireland (White, in Wood 1993: 386). Likewise, they may also last for just a brief period.

91 BJP 1990.

92 Michaels 1998: 149–162, 299–300; 2004: 132–147, 272–273.

93 See Michaels 1998: 162; 2004: 146–147.

94 *Frontline* 24.11.–7.12.1990, cited in Aggarwal and Chowdry 1991: 61.

95 Jaffrelot 1996: 102–103, 422; also Datta 1993: 51.

96 Protocol notes, January 1997.

97 Cited in Prasad 1996: 142.

98 See http://www.vhp.org/vhp_bharat/dedication.html.

99 For further references on martyrologies influenced by Islamic thought and practice, see Ernst 1985; Massignon 1982; Saxer 1984; Schwerin 1984; Wood 1993.

100 See Ernst 1985; Dornseiff: n.d., n.p.

101 Taussig 1987: 121. Taussig considered the role of the sacred, magic and violence in relation to reason in the modern secular state (Taussig 1992: 111–140; 1997).

102 Tanking 1987.

103 Personal email conversation of August 1998.

104 ANI News Reports, 55 minutes, English and Hindi; complemented by a booklet, see Kulkarni 1997.

105 Kulkarni 1997: 8.

106 Ibid.: 91.

107 Personal interview, October 1998.

108 Wood 1993: xv–xvii.

109 Email conversation, August 1998.

110 Excerpt from the press release.

Epilogue

1 Kulkarni 1993.

2 Sudheendra Kulkarni, personal interview, February 1998.

3 Vajpayee 2001.

4 This does not mean that Jain Studios as such has been sidelined. For its television channel, the studios' website claims to reach 18 million homes (see www.jaintv.com/jain_studio.htm). See also Butcher 2003.

5 However, the 'Information Task Force', a special group within the government, is committed to the introduction of computerized facilities in agriculture in order to decentralize information and knowledge transfer.

6 'Let's make India an internet superpower', Press release, BJP, January 12, 1998.

7 Vajpayee 2001.

8 See Castells 1997, chapter 2.

9 One example is the incorporation of about 2,000 RSS-controlled schools in the state of Uttar Pradesh (Vanaik 2001). On the agenda was also the attempt to gain control over text books for schools as well as the publication of books on Indian history.

10 See Brosius 2004.

11 Several incidents point towards a crisis of governance and enormous pressure on the Prime Minister, for example his support of the Election Commission's ban of a VHP procession during the campaign for Assembly Elections in Gujarat in November 2002. The yatra, named *Hindupath Padshahi* (Procession of Hindu Sovereignty) was to start in Godhra and end at the Akshardham temple, on the tenth anniversary of the Babri Masjid demolition (see Menon 2002).

12 Venkatesan 2002.

13 Noorani 2002.

14 Muralidharan 2002, Noorani 2002.

15 Pradhan 2002.

16 Rastogi 2002.

17 There is also an indication that issues and events do not always 'work' according to their organizer's expectations. There was a disappointing turnout of supporters during the run-up to the announced reconstruction ceremony in March 2002 as well as the VHP-sponsored *Poornakooti Mahayagna* that was meant to ratchet up emotions for the Ram temple. The VHP had announced 10,000 people but the actual turnout was 500 (*Indian Express*, 2.6.2002).

18 Schiffauer 2000, p. 321.

19 Aijaz Ahmad reports that according to a poll survey, 91 per cent of urban Indians supported the nuclear tests (Ahmad 1998).

20 See Bunsha 2002a. The Forensic Science Laboratory issued a report on their findings with respect to the burning of the Sabarmati Express, rejecting claims that the

wagons had been set afire by agents from outside (ibid.).

21 Hameed 2002, Setalvad 2002.

22 Kaur 2003, p. 119.

23 Rao 2002.

24 The BJP won 126 seats of 181, with an especially strong support basis in riot-affected constituencies (Yadav 2003). One of the major dilemmas in these elections seems to have been the realization among opposition parties that they could not offer – or did not want to engage in elaborating – an alternative agenda to Hindutva cultural nationalism. Instead, they are affected by what could be termed as a 'mild saffronization' of politics outside the domain of the Sangh Parivar.

25 Mahurkar 2002, p. 23.

26 Bunsha 2002c.

27 Bunsha 2002b.

28 The producers of the website are listed as 'Advisors', 'Lieutenants' and 'Honorary Members'. They work from 'Bharat' (India), the USA and Kuwait (see www.hinduunity.org/branches.html). See Brosius 2004.

29 The introductory text reads: 'THIS PAGE EXPOSES THE EVIL FORCES THAT ARE AGAINST THE MOVEMENT OF HINDUTVA. EACH OF THESE PERSONS AND OR ORGANIZATION HAVE BEEN FOUND GUILTY OF LEADING EFFORTS AGAINST OUR MOVEMENT THROUGH THEIR ACTION OR OTHERWISE: THEIR CRIMES ARE CRIMES AGAINST THE HINDU PEOPLE.' Listed are names of Pakistans General Pervez Musharraf, the Pope, Osama bin Laden, Sonia Gandhi and many others. The netizen is asked to file his or her 'Criminal's Name' on a form, adding 'a brief description of Anti-Hindu Activity carried out by this criminal' (see http://www.hinduunity.org/hitlist.html).

30 See http://www.geocities.com/jairama1/hinduposter.gif and http://www.geocities.com/jairama1/missionkashmirposter.jpg. *Mission Kashmir* is a film by Vinod Chopra, released in the year 2000, starring film stars Hrithik Roshan and Sanjay Dutt. The original film poster has been used for a montage whereby the two heroes are turned into Hindu warriors.

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VIDEOGRAPHY

Key Videos discussed

The Making of a Chief Minister, Jain Studios, 1989, English and Hindi Versions, 33 minutes. Video promoting Jain Studios as a media production company specializing in political campaigning and electioneering software (Chapter 2).

Towards a Cheerful Revolution, Jain Studios, January 1990, Hindi, 11 minutes. Developmental video about Jain Studios *Videos-on-Wheels* (VOW), a communication tool that can be used to unite the country and improve the standard of living of the Indian population by informing and entertaining them with the idea of 'self-empowerment' (Chapter 2).

From Sagar to Saryu (*Sagar se Saryu tak*), Jain Studios, 1990, Hindi, 50 minutes. Video on LK Advani's *Ram Rath Yatra* in September 1989 (Chapters 4–6).

God Manifests Himself (*Bhaye Prakat Kripala*), Jain Studios, March 1990, Hindi, 87 minutes, music and vocals: Ravindra Jain.

Video in two parts. Part I: History of the struggle of Hindu people from the Mughal invasion until today; miracle and invasion scenes. Part II: Documentation of the Ram Shila Pooja in Ayodhya 1989 (Chapters 3–6).

We can give up our lives but we cannot break our vow (*Pran jaye par Vachan na jaye*), Jain Studios, December 1990, Hindi, 57 minutes.

Documentation of the flag-hoisting ceremony in Ayodhya in October/ November 1990, where police and paramilitary forces clashed with *kar sevaks*, leading to the violent death of some 'voluntary workers', referred to as 'martyrs' (Chapters 5–6).

The Truth shall not be touched (*Saach ko anch na Pyaree*), Jain Studios, October 1992, Hindi, 60 minutes.

Made up like a book with several chapters, the video claims to present the true evidence about the legitimacy of the claim for the removal of the Babri mosque and the reconstruction of a Ram temple in Ayodhya. Presentation of 'evidence' in historical and archaeological sources, revenue records of the British Raj, etc. See Chapters 5–6.

Ayodhya 6 December, 1992. What happened? Who did it? Why was it done? (*Ayodhya 6 December, 1992. Kya Hua? Kisne Kiya? Kyo Kiya?*), Jain Studios, February 1993, Hindi, 44 minutes).

Documentation that attempts to trace and give justification for the demolition of the Babri mosque on December 6, 1992. Summary of the history of the Ayodhya agitation. Footage of interviews with *kar sevaks* before the demolition, and with Sangh Parivar leaders commenting on both demolition and communal riots (Chapter 5).

Hail to Mother India – Unity Pilgrimage (*Vande Mataram – Ekta Yatra*), 1992, Hindi, c. 50 minutes, directed and produced by Matthew S, Political Visions, New Delhi. Video documenting the then BJP party president Murli Manohar Joshi's *Unity Pilgrimage* in December 1991–January 1992 from Kanya Kumari in South India to Srinagar in Kashmir, with the aim of hoisting the Indian National flag (Chapter 4).

Swarna Jayanti Rath Yatra – A documentary film on Lal Krishna Advani's Patriotic Pilgrimage, 1997, produced and directed by ANI News Reports, English and Hindi Versions, 55 minutes.

Commissioned by the BJP, this video documents the party's commemoration celebrations of India's 50 Years of Independence. See Chapter 4.

Selection of other Videos

Election campaign videos

Mahanadu NTRama Rao, Jain Studios, c. 1993, Telugu, 25 minutes, commissioned by the Telugu Desam Party (Andhra Pradesh).

Video on the 'Mahanadu Conference', where politicians such as Devi Lal, Chandrashekar, Atal B Vajpayee and NT Rama Rao assembled to discuss the 'national crisis' of Congress(I) governance in India.

Shiv Sena: Bal Thackeray, Jain Studios, October 1989, Marathi version: c. 30 minutes; Hindi version: 6 minutes.

With this election video, the Shiv Sena presents a view on its social activities in the city of Bombay and the state of Maharashtra.

Vijaya Raje Scindia, Jain Studios, November 1989, Hindi, 20 minutes. Election video for BJP, Lok Sabha elections, portrayal of Scindia as 'Mother India'.

Vijay Kumar Malhotra, Jain Studios, 1992, Delhi Assembly election video, BJP Delhi, Hindi, 20 minutes.

Vote for Dr. Jain (BJP), Jain Studios, April 1996, Lok Sabha elections, April 1996. Several versions ranging from 5–12 minutes.

Video promoting JK Jain as BJP candidate for Chandni Chowk, Old Delhi ('Service of humanity is this man's work').

Satrughan Sinha, Jain Studios, 1992, Hindi, 30 minutes, campaign video for Lok Sabha elections.

Sinha campaigning on BJP ticket in New Delhi.

Rajiv Gandhi, Tamil Nadu Elections, Jain Studios, 1989, Tamil, 23 minutes. Video commissioned by Congress(I)/ Rajiv Gandhi for his Assembly Election campaign in the southern state of Tamil Nadu.

Issue-based videos:

Vishwa Hindu Parishad on the Path of Service (*VHP–Kar seva ke patpar*), Jain Studios, no date (c. 1990–2), Hindi, 15 minutes.

Video in photo-essay style about VHP activities in tribal areas. Editor and speaker: Ramnath Ojha; concept: Sitaram Agarwal, both VHP New Delhi.

Universal Cow Mother (*Vishwa Janni Gau*), Jain Studios, 1992, commissioned by the VHP New Delhi, concept: Ramnath Ojha, VHP New Delhi, Hindi, 45 minutes. Video on the meaning of the cow in Hindu mythology and religious practice, use of the cow in everyday life; history of the cow protection movement (esp. RSS and VHP), declaration of claim for imposition of a ban on cow slaughter, issue of demand to close down slaughter houses in India.

Traitors Beware, Hindusthan is Prepared (*Hamlavar Khabadar Hindustan Hai Taiyar*), Jain Studios, 1990, Hindi, 39 minutes.

Issue-based video on Kashmir. Interviews with Hindu refugees in camps outside Kashmir, reports on crisis of separatism and Islamic fanaticism.

Janadesh Yatra, Jain Studios 1993, Hindi, 35 minutes.

Video on the BJP-organized 'March for the People's Verdict' (September 1993), promoting cultural, territorial and spiritual unity, BJP depicted as the only guarantor of political stability and national harmony.

Shri Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, Janmastabdi 1989, 1989, Hindi, c. 50 minutes. Video commemorating first RSS leader Hedgewar's birth centenary, including footage of RSS celebrations at the Ramlila Ground in Delhi on April 2, 1989. Presented by Jain Studios (Produced by Indu Video Films Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi).

Father, Son and Holy War, 1994, Anand Patwardhan, English, 120 minutes. Documentary film investigating the crisis of male identity and inquiry into Hindutva nationalism's rise in contemporary Indian society.

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